THE BOOKMAN

Edited by Seward Collins

MAY, 1931 VOL. LXXIII; NO. 3

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE

I. DR. FLEXNER AND THE MODERN UNIVERSITY

by Robert Shafer

"LORDE GOD, howe many good and clene wittes of children be nowe a dayes perisshed by ignorant schole maisters!" Sir Thomas Elyot uttered this exclamation in 1531, just four centuries ago, in *The Boke Named the Governour*, and went on to enlarge upon it in terms which might as appropriately be used today. Who, indeed, has not heard the same complaint in our time? Yet it was an old story when Elyot wrote—as old as Plato, perhaps as old as our civilization. And the universities from which ours are descended had scarcely been constituted before their officers became aware of a difficulty which is still lamented almost daily on every campus. As early as 1231 the chancellor of the University of Paris had "begun to complain that there is too much organization and too much time consumed with university business"! (Noted by C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, p. 384.) For seven centuries that grievance has existed, has continued to bring forth accusations which frequently are bitter and which always are well-founded; and it will exist seven centuries more should our civilization prove so durable.

Elyot, moreover, was far from alone in the sixteenth century in thinking that though there were "some well lerned" who taught, still, they were "but God knoweth a fewe, and they with small effecte". For, only a couple of years before, Erasmus had complained that schoolmasters were "not seldom men of no learning at all, or, what is worse, of no character". Often they were men "of uncouth manners, not always sober, likely enough to be invalids, or cripples, or even mentally deficient"—since "anybody was thought good enough to put over the school". In the latter half of the century Roger Ascham wrote: "Commonlie, many scholemasters, some, as I have seen, moe, as I have heard tell, be of so crooked a nature, as, when they meete with a hard witted scholer, they rather breake him, than bowe him, rather marre him, than mend him"—"the master many times being as ignorant as the childe, what to saie properlie and fitlie to the matter". A few years afterward Richard

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mulcaster opened the first chapter of his *Positions* by saying: "Whosoever shall consider with any judgement the manner of training up children which we use generally within this Realme, cannot but wish that the thing were bettered, as I my selfe do". For reasons of policy, Mulcaster spoke moderately and refrained from particularizing the faults to which he alluded; but he could not help going on to insist that they were many and grave. And they continued into the next century, when Henry Peacham declared he had heard many gentlemen deeply bewail their misguided youth, "with too late wishing that they had lost a joynt, or halfe their estats, so that they had beene held to their Bookes when they were young. The most (and not without cause) lay the fault upon bad Masters; to say truth, it is a generall plague and complaint of the whole Land; for, for one discreet and able Teacher, you shall find twenty ignorant and carelesse; who (among so many fertile and delicate wits as England affordeth) whereas they make one Scholler, they marre ten".

And for more than two thousand years one reason—along with others which have varied—has always been given for the perdurability of the incompetent teacher, as it is given still today. The teacher is underpaid, and is virtually despised by those who esteem themselves the real men of the world. It was so in Athens, as one can learn from the testimony of Plato and Demosthenes, even though a few of the sophists did become wealthy men. And in later times Lucian and a number of Roman writers all bear witness to the wretched poverty of the teacher and to the contempt with which he was regarded by those who employed him and even by his pupils. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Erasmus quotes some of this evidence in complaining against the penurious treatment of the schoolmaster in his own day: "Take the case of a father who grudges the pay of a decent tutor, whom he puts off with a lower wage than he gives his groom. Yet the same niggard will spend a fortune upon banquets and wine, upon play, jesters, and his mistress. . . . At a single feast and the dicing that follows he will lose two hundred pounds, but he complains of extravagance if his son's education cost him twenty. Frugality? Yes, by all means: but in this matter of all others frugality is no economy; it is another name for madness". (*De Pueris Instituendis*, W. H. Woodward's translation in *Erasmus concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, pp. 193-194.) But Elyot, Ascham, and Mulcaster unite in asserting that this madness was well-nigh universal in England throughout the century. Mulcaster insists (in his *Positions*, 1581, Chapter 41) that teachers must be paid better salaries, and must be given positions of greater security and dignity, if the State is to obtain adequately trained and capable men who will give their whole time to their work, and who will continue in it for their whole lives, not using the school and the university simply "for a shift" until the first opportunity comes to pass thence to some better means of livelihood.

On the whole, these complaints about the teacher and the reason given for his deficiencies are practically identical with what is being said today. If, for example, one reads the first half of Chapter XXXII in Professor Leon B. Richardson's *Study of the Liberal College*, which was printed in 1924, one cannot help being struck by the fact that the most important difference made by the passage of three and a half or four centuries is simply Professor Richardson's use of more subdued and colorless words, and of a greater number of them.

Yet, though the schools, like governments, like the churches, have always been subject—and justly subject—to complaint, and to much the same complaint from one age to another, it is equally true that significant criticism has had, wave-like, its rising and falling periods. And in several ages of the world it has reached a height and volume

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sufficient to tear down strong barriers and to bring about real changes. This it did—to mention only the great instance familiar in a general way to everybody—in the Renaissance; and the writers I have quoted were amongst those influential in the achievement. And this, unquestionably, criticism is accomplishing at the present time. Something over half a century ago American education entered into an experimental period. The inauguration of the so-called free-elective system at Harvard and the almost simultaneous appearance of two graduate schools—at Johns Hopkins and at Harvard—were themselves striking changes; but it has become clear with time that the chief significance of these events lies in their opening up an era of combined expansion and experimentation which is only now drawing to its close. No one, of course, can know when the decisive moment of transition will come. It may be distant one year, or ten years, or even more. The chances are overwhelmingly against its being recognized immediately when it does come. We love to believe we are assisting at great crises; and even in this age, when nearly all of our popular wise men are tacitly or openly preaching a gospel of human insignificance or beastliness, the journals are incorrigible in proclaiming epochal actions—which usually are forgotten within nine days—while the really important events pass unnoticed. But, though the time be uncertain and probably will be left for historians of another generation to discover, nothing can be more evident than the fact that American education has reached a fateful division of the ways, that experimentation has advanced to its limit, that a crucial decision, if it is not made thoughtfully and deliberately, will soon be made by default.

For dissatisfaction with our colleges and universities is not only persistent and widespread—it has become universal. And dissatisfaction with our schools is rapidly increasing as people are beginning to discover the actual effects of recent experimentation in that field and of pseudo-scientific teacher-training. Though the problems are intimately connected, I shall have as little as possible to say about the schools. But in the field of higher education it is a significant fact that discontent has become profound not because administrators have stubbornly remained deaf to criticism; it has become profound in spite of the fact that presidents and deans have anxiously kept their ears to the ground, and have tried promptly to adopt every suggestion communicated to them. Novelty, indeed, has often in recent years served as a strong recommendation for suggestions hopefully termed "progressive"—a condition by no means without precedent in history, as some would have us believe, but very unfavorable to solid achievement. And the immediate result, of course, has been chaotic, which has become a new ground for complaint.

II

No one familiar with the large and rapidly growing literature of the subject is likely to think these statements exaggerated. It is occasionally said, to be sure, that despite all criticism colleges and universities have grown wonderfully in wealth and size during the last half-century, and that consequently they must be in a fundamentally sound condition, answering, as they evidently do, to real needs. But the same thing, of course, could be said of certain patent-medicine manufactories, and, for a briefer period, of the associated bootleggers of America. How far, indeed, this argument falls beside the point has received its classic demonstration from Dr. Abraham Flexner, in his recently published book, *Universities, American, English, German.* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1930. $3.50.) This is an ill-proportioned work, with very serious faults, but one which, at the same time, is unanswerable, fundamental, and final in its criticism. And its criticism is of the most damaging kind—so damaging that one is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forced to think it must have some practical effect. To say this is to say that the book may mark a real turning-point in American education. It gathers together so much which has been only hinted at, or partially expressed, though with increasing frequency, for many years; it frankly states so much that university people have long known and have often talked about privately to each other, without daring to write publicly of the scandals of their calling; it strikes so deeply and surely into the heart of many of our troubles, laying bare our confusions and pretences with the serenity of the detached observer, yet with great cumulative force; it, in a word, so lights up our actual situation, at the end of half a century of "progressive" experimentation and expansion, that inevitably one is tempted to regard it as the informed and mature verdict of the scholars and scientists of this generation, rather than as a merely individual achievement.

Yet nothing so masterly ever came out of a committee or an association, and the basis of the book's authority and finality—in so far as these things can be accounted for externally—is to be found in Dr. Flexner's career. He was graduated from the Johns Hopkins University in 1886, whence he returned to his native city, Louisville, to teach in its high school for almost twenty years. He taught "mainly, though not exclusively", Latin and Greek; and thus had under his charge pupils destined for the colleges, so that he was stimulated, as he watched their onward course, to consider college problems, and also to consider high-school problems particularly in their relation to college entrance requirements. The outcome was a small book, *The American College: A Criticism*, which was published in 1908, when its author had reached the age of forty-two. Meanwhile Dr. Flexner had left the Louisville High School not to return, had spent some time as a graduate student at two American universities (one of them Harvard), and had spent "something above a year in England and Germany", attending lectures in the winter of 1906-1907 at the University of Berlin. In 1908 he accepted a post offered him by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and remained in the employ of that Foundation until 1925, acting as its secretary during the last eight years of this period. His most important and most prolonged investigations in these years lay in the field of medical education, concerning which he published careful and authoritative studies in 1910, 1912, and 1925. He also, however, was commissioned to prepare a treatise on *Prostitution in Europe*, which was published in 1913, and he aided in several investigations of public education—notably in the survey of the Gary Schools—conducted by the General Education Board. In 1916 he published a pamphlet in which he outlined his conception of *A Modern School*—an essay which involved him in a somewhat heated controversy not entirely to his credit—and in 1923 he republished this piece together with another essay in which he sketched his idea of *A Modern College*. He had, by some of the work mentioned above, been drawn into close connection with the General Education Board, and in 1925 he became its Director of the Division of Studies and of Medical Education, holding this important post until 1928. In the preceding year he had published a lecture delivered at Harvard, *Do Americans Really Value Education?*—and in 1928 he delivered the Taylorian Lecture at Oxford, publishing it under the title, *The Burden of Humanism*. In the spring of the same year, on the invitation of the Rhodes Trust, he read three lectures at Oxford on *Universities*, which subsequently were expanded to form the volume published late last autumn under the same title.

Dr. Flexner, in short, has spent his life as a teacher and as a student of education. Endowed with an alert and questioning mind, he has made full use of exceptional opportunities to familiarize himself with contem-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

porary institutions of learning from the elementary school to graduate and professional schools. He has held positions of prominence and of great responsibility, and has exerted a strong influence upon educational practice. He has preserved, at the same time, a real though limited independence, and has been able to write from an intimate and exact knowledge, yet from a vantage-point definitely outside of the teaching profession. He has, besides, never ceased to learn, so that there is a marked and significant difference of quality between his latest book and his first.

Never were there one-half so many alleged "authorities" upon every conceivable subject, near-subject, and no-subject as in this age which prides itself upon its disillusioned repudiation of all authority; yet if anyone can now speak with finality on education, Dr. Flexner's career has singularly qualified him to do so. And the proof that he has remarkably used his opportunities lies open to the public in *Universities*.

About one-half of the book is given to an examination of American universities, the remainder containing critical descriptions of English and German universities, and a chapter on the modern university, not as it is, but as it should be. No summary can do justice to Dr. Flexner's picture of present conditions, with its wealth of detailed and unchallengeable evidence, set forth judicially, yet with just the right touch of mildly scornful wit. Nevertheless, this picture is the indispensable basis of Dr. Flexner's proposals —and, indeed, henceforth of all serious discussion of American universities and colleges —so that at least an indication of its nature is necessary.

III

Dr. Flexner confines his attention to "the most highly developed and prominent of American institutions"—Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Wisconsin, Yale, and a few others—leaving the condition of the rest to the imagination. He points out that the vast majority of students come to the university from the public high school, but that most of these institutions "are high schools in name only". They are "neither intelligent, selective, nor thorough" in their instruction, nearly all of which is really elementary, and all of which is much influenced by "the prevailing philosophy of education" whose tendency is "to discredit hard work". Thus ill-equipped, if not positively demoralized, the young student proceeds to an institution of higher learning which is an amorphous compound of the secondary school, the liberal college, the technical school, the business school, the vocational-training school, the professional school, and the graduate school. These schools not only exist as parts of a single institution; they overlap, are intertwined with each other, and cannot be clearly distinguished one from another even in the university's printed announcements. Dr. Flexner recognizes, and indeed insists with emphasis, that at our best universities an earnest student who wants a real education and who knows what it is can find "almost every imaginable subject of sound intellectual value" taught by "competent and at times highly distinguished" professors with the aid of "admirable laboratory and library facilities". During the last half-century our development has in this respect been no less than amazing, and it is highly creditable to a nation which has had much else of fundamental importance to do. But the process of adulterating and diluting education which begins in the elementary years continues, none the less, in even the best of our universities. At Columbia, for example, students may satisfy a considerable portion of the entrance requirements "by extension courses or by correspondence courses taken under the Home Study Department"; and, once they are admitted, although they "may study serious subjects in a serious fashion", they "may also complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree by including in their

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

courses of study 'principles of advertising', 'the writing of advertised copy', 'advertising layout', 'advertising research', 'practical poultry raising', 'secretarial booking', 'business English', 'elementary stenography', 'newspaper practice', 'reporting and copy editing', 'feature writing', 'book reviewing', 'wrestling, judo, and self-defence' ". And advanced students in the School of Practical Arts may count towards a Columbia degree courses given in Teachers College in " 'cookery, fundamental processes', 'fundamental problems in clothing', 'clothing decoration', 'family meals', 'recent research in cookery', 'food etiquette and hospitality', 'principles of home laundering', 'social life of the home', 'gymnastics and dancing for men including practice in clog dancing', and 'instruction (elementary or advanced) in school orchestras and bands' ".

At the University of Chicago, more than one-fourth of the requirements for entrance "may be made up of stenography, typewriting, and bookkeeping", while "home economics and agriculture—as taught in high schools—are also 'accepted' ". At Chicago too, as at Columbia, entrance requirements may be satisfied by enrollment in correspondence courses offered by the University —and these include elementary, French, Spanish, and German. One-half of the "units" necessary for a bachelor's degree may also be obtained through correspondence courses; and the University "provides and accepts for a bachelor's degree courses that belong in technical or vocational schools, not in a university—not even in a sound secondary school".*

Amongst the courses that may be counted towards a bachelor's degree (A.B. or B.S.) at the University of Wisconsin are: "newspaper reporting", "copy reading", "retail advertising", "community newspaper", "business letter-writing", "sales administration", "national advertising campaigns", "principles of journalism", "nursing", "drug-store practice", "first aid to injured", "community recreation", "kinesiology", "elementary costume design", "principles of coaching", "elementary pottery", and "employee and leadership training problems".

There are a few institutions—Dr. Flexner names several—which give no credit towards admission or towards the bachelor's degree "for any of the absurd courses above mentioned"; but even these accept ineffectively trained students, the great majority of whom lack "intellectual background or outlook", and remain "devoid of cultural interests". Almost all of them "count points and units and credits—an abominable system, destructive of disinterested and protracted intellectual effort". And "they are all mad on the subject of competitive and intercollegiate athletics". On the whole, and despite exceptions, "it is still true that American college students are, at the close of four years, intellectually considered, an unselected and untrained body of attractive boys and girls, who have . . . not yet received even a strenuous secondary school training".

* Dr. Flexner's book was published just before the announcement of the new plan of undergraduate work at Chicago. Some of his statements may be inapplicable to it, though probably not those summarized above. It appears to be a change for the worse. The following significant comment on it promptly appeared in a Cincinnati newspaper:

TIMELESS EDUCATION

The so-called "timeless system" of education is not new, although it is spoken of as if it were. It has been used by private business colleges ever since the Civil War. Miller business courses have always been conducted upon the principle that each student be permitted to advance in accordance with his application and ability.

SAVES TIME AND MONEY

By this method a student may frequently complete a Business Training Course in from one-fourth to one-half the time required by the old method used in High Schools and Colleges. This means not only a great saving in the cost of a practical education, but

ALSO LENGTHENS LIFE

as it puts one on a salary-earning basis several years sooner. To save time is equivalent to lengthening life.

Send for free bulletin giving full information.

Enroll Now for the New Year Term Beginning January 5.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In most universities—by means of interchangeable courses, five-year plans, six-year plans, or the like—the graduate, professional, and vocational schools reach down into the colleges in such fashion that no one can tell where the one school begins or the other ends. Thus confusion is increased and perpetuated, and irresistible opportunities arise for wild developments. Anyone, for example, who has a bachelor's degree can gain admission to the graduate schools of our best universities, and can there study what he pleases. It thus has happened, in reputable institutions, that students have received the master's degree for work less extensive and more elementary than that required, in the same department, for the bachelor's degree. And it is usual for graduate students to find themselves in the same classes with undergraduates—even in classes organized and taught primarily for sophomores. Perhaps, moreover, as things are, this is where they belong, for the majority of them—as President Lowell of Harvard has said—have no business in the graduate school. (Professor Woodbridge, when still Dean of the Graduate Faculties at Columbia, wrote, in his *Annual Report* for 1927, that "only a fourth" of the graduate students needed "to be considered seriously in the interest of scholarship and research".)

The wildest developments, however, are to be found, as Dr. Flexner shows, in our departments of sociology and in certain schools or so-called institutes which have grown out of the graduate school or have grown up beside it. Of these the most conspicuous and the worst are the colleges of education. Dr. Flexner's account of them is a tale of rapid degeneration from promising and useful beginnings to a level of work which appears to be "devised to frighten off intelligence". "The American college of education, not wholly, but largely oblivious of the really important, is devoting itself more and more to the technical, trivial, and sometimes absurd." In it "one finds hordes of professors and instructors possessing meagre intellectual background whose interests centre in technique and administration viewed in a narrow *ad hoc* fashion". The drift to *"ad hoc"* instruction is by no means confined to the college of education. Similarly pernicious instruction is the rule in the schools devoted to "the make-believe professions", as Dr. Flexner aptly calls them—journalism, business, library "science", domestic "science", and optometry—and it is also spreading through the colleges of liberal arts. It may be defined as the attempt to train a person—who is assumed to have neither good sense, breeding, nor the capacity for genuine education—to do a given "highly specific thing". It originated with certain "efficiency experts" and "job analysts" who were confronted with the problem of training men to perform mechanical acts, in the minimum of time, in modern manufactories. Thence it has spread to, and through, secondary and higher education, where it offers limitless opportunities for the multiplication of courses "designed to teach tricks, devices, and conventions". That such narrow training is completely subversive of genuine education, and that, moreover, it is generally unsuccessful, in the schools and universities, does not discourage its enthusiastic votaries, who apparently imagine that their performances are "scientific" and that they are assisting the march of "progress".*

* Dr. Flexner tells of "two of the great universities in the Middle West" which "have after disastrous experiences . . . found it impossible to find a Ph.D. in domestic science who could handle their own food problems and balance their budgets". Hence one has given the work to a woman of "ordinary education", who has had complete success; while the other "gave the problem to a young man who had been an instructor in French but wished employment on the administrative side of the university. Instead of a deficit, the department showed a profit approximating $50,000 at the end of the very first year". Such evidence could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Dr. Flexner gives enough of it to convince any disinterested person that, as he says, schools, colleges, and universities are throwing away "the opportunity really to *educate*, for the sake of a flimsy and unpractical 'training' that for the most part does not even *train*".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But, though one can now find it almost everywhere, *ad hoc* training flourishes especially in the colleges of education. Dr. Flexner cites as fair examples, from amongst hundreds of similar courses, the following titles, taken from the catalogue of Teachers College at Columbia: "manuscript writing", "teaching of educational sociology", "administrative procedures in curriculum construction", "research in the history of school instruction in history", "music for teachers of literature and history", "methods used in counseling individuals", "research in college administration", "psychology of higher education", "teaching English to foreigners", "teaching the individual", "extra-curricular activities, including school clubs, excursions, athletic insignia, class parties and dances, extra-curricular finances, and a record card for pupil activity".

Dr. Flexner observes that the calibre of the persons who are drawn to such studies "may be gathered from the trivial and uninteresting character of educational periodicals and the subjects of the dissertations submitted for higher degrees". The latter demonstrate "that the unconscious effort to frighten away intelligence is usually quite successful". He gives a list of accepted dissertations drawn at random from the records of Chicago, Columbia, and Harvard, and amongst them are these: *The Experience Variables: A Study of the Variable Factors in Experience Contributing to the Formation of Personality; City School Attendance Service; Administrative Problems of the High School Cafeteria; Suggestion in Education; The Technique of Estimating School Equipment Costs; Public School Plumbing Equipment; Vocational Activities and Social Understanding in the Curriculum for Stenographer-Clerks; Concerning our Girls and What They Tell Us; A Scale for Measuring Antero-Posterior Posture of Ninth Grade Boys; The Technique of Activity and Trait Analysis Applied to Y.M.C.A. Executive Secretaries as a Basis for Curricular Material;* and *An Analysis of Janitor Service in Elementary Schools.* Concerning the last Dr. Flexner asks: "Why elementary?"—and answers that obviously this title "suggests other theses—and new subjects are in demand, as students multiply—the duties of a junior high school janitor, of a high school janitor, of a college janitor, *etc.*" He adds that he asked a professor of school administration if these were really different subjects. "Oh, yes," the professor replied, "the lavatory problem, for example, is with small boys quite different from the same problem at the high school level!"

Dr. Flexner shows that nonsense of this kind, as he calls it, is not entirely confined to the "make-believe professions", to the social sciences, and to education. He instances a recent "successful" dissertation for the doctorate entitled *A Study of the Bacterial Content of Cotton Under-shirts.* "Externally", he says, "it conforms to academic type—states its problems, reviews the literature, describes the investigation, and closes with summary and conclusions; there are the requisite graphs, tables, references, *etc.*" But from the conclusions he quotes: "From the results obtained, it is reasonable to believe that underwear worn next to the skin does contain varying numbers of micro-organisms. . . . On a hot day the body might perspire freely which in all probability would encourage rapid growth of organisms. . . . A comparison of the shirts worn various lengths of time shows that the number of bacteria tends to increase with the length of time garments are worn". And the point sustained is, that though nonsense is published in America in practically every field of study, it does not in some fields—in the "exact sciences", for example—carry great weight or do serious harm, except to its authors. But in the social "sciences" and in the "science" of education it brings distinction to its authors and leads to academic promotion—as in the case of a Professor Charters, whose *Analysis of Secretarial Duties and Traits*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"reveals two points of profound social, scientific, and vocational importance: (1) that there are 871 secretarial duties, among them taking dictation (!), winding the clock, locking the desk, weighing mail, getting rid of cranks and beggars, answering the telephone, dusting, and opening the mail; and (2) that secretaries should possess 44 traits, among them, charm, imagination, graciousness, humor (sense of only), modesty (not conceit), poise, and self-respect". The same gentleman has more recently wasted a large sum of money ($42,000) and several years of his life in compiling a similarly worthless study of teacher-training, in which it is disclosed "that teachers are called on to do 1,001 things, variously subdivided, and that they should possess 83 traits, which may fortunately be so apportioned that a senior high school teacher need possess only 26, a junior high school teacher 26, an intermediate grade teacher 26, and a primary grade teacher 24".

Dr. Flexner, for the purposes of his examination, divides our universities roughly into three parts: the secondary schools, the graduate and professional schools, and the "public service stations". It is impossible, and unnecessary, to extend this outline to all the heads of his discussion. He goes on to scrutinize several of the so-called institutes which have recently begun to spring up in our graduate schools, and notably the absurd project at Yale which goes by the name of the Institute of Human Relations. He then turns to the "public service" activities of universities, under which head he groups extension divisions, home study departments (correspondence courses), "schools of domestic science or household arts, schools of journalism, business, library science or librarianship, optometry, hotel management, *etc.*, none of which belongs within a university". What must be said of these activities is sufficiently indicated by his conclusions drawn from his examination of the extension and correspondence courses of Columbia: "The whole thing is business, not education; and it is a business out of which Columbia University has made in a single year a profit of $300,000.00! . . . Columbia, Harvard, Chicago, the state universities, and many institutions of equal and lesser prominence and importance are 'selling' education; but the business plane is lower than that of reputable commercial establishments, for the latter return the buyer's money, if the 'goods' fail to correspond with the terms of the advertisement. It has apparently not yet occurred to our universities that 'religion' was once 'sold' and with the same consequences to the church that are likely to overtake the universities".

IV

Only one conclusion can be drawn from the evidence which lies at hand in every American university. Dr. Flexner, of course, merely skims its surface. The preceding paragraphs are merely a summary of a summary. Yet they make clear the justice, the necessity, of Dr. Flexner's accusation. "America," he says, "with almost boundless resources, neither regards higher education at its proper value, nor knows what it is: university presidents and university faculties are—with notable exceptions, of course—in the dark." "A sound sense of values has not been preserved." Thus the way has been opened, and taken, towards "lowering the idea of the university"; and our own experience shows that, "when once lowering has begun, the idea itself will soon be lost". Our universities have "increased their genuine facilities and opportunities; they have simultaneously and needlessly cheapened, vulgarized, and mechanized themselves".

What, then, is a university? Dr. Flexner does not even mention a misapprehension which, nevertheless, is widely current, amongst teachers and professors as well as others, and which has had its share in bringing about our present state of confusion. This is the notion that "university" signifies an institution where all subjects may be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

learned. Small Latin and no history here combine to mischievous effect, and seem not only to justify, but to demand, provision for as many subjects of study, as many "schools", "colleges", "institutes", and "courses", as possible within a single administrative framework, in order to draw ever nearer to the ideal goal of absolute all-inclusiveness which "university" is supposed to designate.

Actually the word stands for something much more modest, and much less open to exploitation, than is this notion. In late classical and in medieval Latin *universitas* was used, chiefly in legal connections, to signify simply a society, corporation, or community in its collective aspect—quite as we use these three words today—and for this reason, and this reason alone, it came to be attached to the higher schools from which ours are descended. The earliest universities were all formed because a large number of students had gathered round some one teacher or group of teachers who had become famous for some special study, and because as individuals these students had no legal footing in the towns to which they came, and thus created social problems which were solved in characteristic medieval fashion by issuance of papers of incorporation. Thus the university at first, in most cases, was merely an incorporated society of scholars, younger and older, of students and teachers, living together in some center of learning. The word designated the scholars, not their studies, which might be—and for a time were—confined in one university to medicine, in another to law, and in another to dialectic. As the centuries passed, universities did tend to include in their curricula the whole range of higher studies, in faculties of arts, of philosophy, and of the three learned professional studies, divinity, law, and medicine. This development, however, was something indifferent from the point of view of the name and nature of a university; and the word is in fact defined today in the *Oxford Dictionary* as, "The whole body of teachers and scholars engaged, at a particular place, in giving and receiving instruction in the higher branches of learning; such persons associated together as a society or corporate body, with a definite organization and acknowledged powers and privileges (especially that of conferring degrees), and forming an institution for the promotion of education in the higher or more important branches of learning".

Dr. Flexner's book is in effect a vindication of the historic idea of the university. It does not conclude in a proposal to turn back the pages of time; on the contrary, like many another book in our day, it makes too much of the processes of change and of the unique conditions and problems of the present age. But, while Dr. Flexner emphasizes strongly the fact that universities have changed, and should change, to meet new conditions, he recognizes no less—and demonstrates with finality—that our changes of the last half-century have been, on the whole, simply disastrous. And he is true to the historic idea of the university, as well as to our present needs, in the reformation which he proposes.

Broadly, Dr. Flexner, as has been mentioned above, characterizes present conditions by saying that "a sound sense of values has not been preserved". In its place, confusion has come to reign—confusion ever deeper and more widespread. It is not possible to shut one's eyes to the fact that some people find their profit in confusion. The pickpocket, the stock-market gambler, are familiar instances. There are also pickpockets in intellectual, in educational realms. In the course of our "wild, uncontrolled, and uncritical expansion", "the quack, the technician, the clever 'salesman', and the practical man"—as well as the politician—have edged their way into a society whose serious members have tended, under such conditions, simply to withdraw into themselves. Confusion has been powerfully promoted, moreover, by inappropriate and fallacious arguments drawn from the fact that the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

United States is a democracy;* and it has further been promoted by the long bewilderment into which we have been thrown by rapid and far-reaching scientific and technological changes.

What is the remedy? There is only one—a determined effort, despite all the opposition that is bound to come from the quacks, the technicians, the "salesmen", and the stupid brothers—a determined effort so to reconstitute the university that it may reasonably be expected to perform its distinctive service to civilization. The true concern of the university is study, not training. The true concern of the university is the study, not of all subjects, but of "the higher or more important branches of learning.† The true concern of the university is with quality, not with quantity. It is of not the slightest moment how many subjects are presented in a university, nor how many monographs on them are published annually, nor by how many professors they are represented, nor how many students are engaged in their study. It is of the highest moment that no subject should be represented except by a thoroughly competent scholar, that no publication should be encouraged unless it is of real importance, that no student should be admitted without adequate training, and that no degree should be conferred that is not deserved. The true concern of the university, in other words, is precisely with distinctions, with the making and preserving of valid distinctions; and just as no individual can perform his proper work satisfactorily, or indeed at all, whatever that work may be, if he is constantly subject to interruptions, to distractions, to miscellaneous calls upon his time and energy, so equally no university can perform its appropriate service to civilization except with singleness of purpose.

And this obviously means, first of all, that the several schools or faculties of the university must be clearly marked off from each other, and that each must form an organic whole, congruous and duly proportioned in its parts. Instruction in cooking, however necessary and proper in its place, is nothing but a distraction, an absurdity, and a source of confusion in a course of study leading to the bachelor's degree in liberal arts. Furthermore, education is one thing, and technical training is another, and vocational training is still another. Everybody knows this and is agreed about it when specific examples are named. Everybody knows that a mechanical engineer is a technically trained man, perhaps very highly trained, but that he is not, by virtue of this training, an educated man. Everybody knows that a sign-painter is a vocationally trained man, perhaps very carefully trained, but that he is not, by virtue of this training, an educated man, or a technically trained man. We know well enough that these differences are real, and we are capable of distinguishing them, but in our universities today we act upon this knowledge fitfully and often proceed as if it were our set purpose to befog ourselves as completely as possible.

We shall never set free the university for its proper work, however, until we consent to make these distinctions consistently and rigorously, and until we realize that educa-

* This argument, that democracy demands the levelling down of all distinctions in every direction, has been frequently voiced throughout the history of the country. In earlier days it was a nuisance rather than a serious threat (as can be seen, for example, in Mrs. Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*); and nowadays it is not taken seriously, so far as I know, anywhere save by interested members of university faculties. Dr. Flexner pays sufficient attention to it when he remarks that even these men "do not ignore all distinctions; they simply ignore the real distinctions". They do not, for example, admit "manicuring, hair-bobbing, or toe-dancing" amongst college-entrance requirements; but it would be as sensible to do so, he adds, as to admit some subjects which have received their approval, such as stenography and bookkeeping.

† Just where we are now was recently illustrated by the dean of an undergraduate college, who announced that all subjects of study were of exactly equal importance and would be so maintained by him as long as he held his position. This is called "maintaining the unity of the faculty"; a principle of action which, as it may mean anything or nothing, opens the easiest possible way to abuse destructive of everything for which the university should stand.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is a proper function of the university, but that technical training and, even more, vocational training are not proper functions of the university. No one institution can do all things well, any more than it can care for unlimited numbers. What is true of the individual, when he becomes a jack-of-all-trades, is equally true, perhaps even more disastrously true, of the university. And just as cooking, cost-accounting, editorial-writing, textile decoration, and the like are sources of confusion and pernicious evils in the college of liberal arts, so also the courses for the "make-believe professions"—the schools of domestic "science", of business, of journalism, of library "science", of commercial art, and the like—are sources of confusion and pernicious evils in the university. For some of them there is no real place, no real need, anywhere; for others there is a need—but a need that could be satisfied more modestly, more efficiently, and more economically in professedly technical or vocational schools. Dr. Flexner is for banishing them all forthwith, and his argument for so doing is unquestionably sound; but since this will everywhere be thought an impossible undertaking—even where it is accepted as a counsel of perfection—it should be emphasized that much good will result from a less severe and an immediately practicable undertaking: the complete separation of the work of these schools from the university's work of education and study, and the relegation of their staffs and their diplomas to a subordinate place. This would be simply the honest recognition of a distinction which does exist, say what we will, and it would in itself help effectually to keep us all aware of what we are trying to do. It would in addition undoubtedly promote a wholesome deflation of these schools, and make them less inefficient than they usually now are, by subjecting them to the responsible oversight of the university faculty.

No less important is the removal of another source of confusion—the intertwining of the graduate school, already mentioned, not only with the college of liberal arts and the professional schools, but also with the technical and even the vocational schools. Dr. Flexner, setting forth his conception of the modern university, specifies four major concerns of which the scholars and scientists on its faculty should be conscious: "The conservation of knowledge and ideas; the interpretation of knowledge and ideas; the search for truth; the training of students who will practise and 'carry on'. . . . Original thinkers", he goes on to say, "and investigators do not therefore represent the only type of university professor. . . . It is, however, creative activity, productive and critical inquiry—all in a sense without practical responsibility—that must bulk ever larger and larger in the modern university. Conservation continues to be not only important, but essential alike to education and to research; but it is destined . . . to become incidental to the extension of knowledge, to training at a high level, and to a critical attempt to set a value upon the doings of men". These are great matters. And here also the true concern of the university is precisely with distinctions, with the making and preserving of real distinctions. Upon the scrupulous performance of this unending task rests all that we are, or can hope to be, or to do—upon it rests our civilization and the possibility of its continuance. "Productive and critical inquiry in the higher or more important branches of learning"—how remote in appearance this is from what our politicians in education love to call "the real needs of the People"! But, of course, no appearance could be more deceptive. Nothing else approaches this in importance, because it is fundamental; because conjoint creative and critical activity makes the patterns of thought and practical life which the multitude follow. If history teaches anything, it teaches this—and teaches it so impressively that, as a matter of fact, no one who thinks has the slightest doubt concerning it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doubt there may reasonably be, however, concerning the ability of any institution to discover and foster those who will best reward the opportunities it can give for the search after truth, and for "critical attempts to set a value upon the doings of men". Genius lighteth where it will, remains often unknown, or long obscure, or shows itself only to be scoffed at, or reviled; genius goes its own way, will not bend under the yoke of prescription, is solitary, fitful, even morose; genius is a light above light, shining with a supersensual glow, inobvious save to instructed and purified eyes. But institutions, even at the best, are conservative, cautious, and fallible. That this is a difficulty which by its very nature is not completely soluble, nobody can deny. By its very nature—because a prudent conservatism is as important and fundamental a virtue in the guardians of our deepest interests as is discovery. Yet honest, untiring, intelligent effort can do much, very much, to lessen the scope and seriousness of this contradiction, as men have long since learned; and institutions remain the indispensable channels of the stream of civilization. They can never be made to function perfectly, but no more can any other human instrumentality, from the simplest to the most complex, so that this is no reason for failing to secure from them what they can do. And universities, though they cannot always discover the right men, and cannot always give them fit encouragement, can often do so if they will. They can, moreover, always perform an office only less important. They can critically take up the suggestions thrown off by genius, purge them, preserve them, develop them, and hand them on;—make them, in short, practically effective and permanent possessions of the race. They can thus become invaluable centers of intellectual authority;—and authority, as Dr. Flexner says, must be lodged somewhere in a cultured nation.

There is no institution in America at this time except the university which is capable of exercising a responsible intellectual authority—an authority rational, subject to review, but constant and real. And in fact our universities are built on this basis, and constituted for the exercise of authority, and in a sense everybody is agreed about this. Members of faculties must always, all of them, be experts; the apparatus of research is industriously accumulated, often at great expense; productivity is encouraged in the most whole-hearted manner—by forcing the experts to depend on it for retention of their jobs and, even more, for promotion. And yet, despite well-nigh universal agreement with Dr. Flexner's conception of the major offices of the university, and despite practices ostensibly in accord with it, our institutions of learning have been steadily for a generation losing whatsoever measure of authority they once possessed. Never, as I have already said, has any country or age possessed one-half so many "authorities" on every conceivable subject as we have now. But they have sunk the ship;—as anyone can assure himself by considering the intellectual importance of our universities in comparison with that of the universities of France, Germany, and England. There are striking individual exceptions, but by and large we are running to the multiplication of "authorities" on "Boiled Icing", on "Variations in Demand for Clothing at Different Income Levels", on "Trends in Hosiery Advertising", on "Methods of Dishwashing". And very often the little "fields" cultivated by our "authorities" in biology, in literature, in history, are only less ridiculous in aspect because they are less familiar. One thing can be said for our development of these possibilities of research, as Dr. Flexner remarks: "The fear that the conquests of science may shortly leave research nothing to do vanishes before the new Alexanders, who have discovered in the inane and trivial inexhaustible worlds to conquer!"

For this degeneration there is one obvious remedy. Clearly the fundamental responsi-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bility of the modern university is the special and peculiar concern of its graduate school. Hence Dr. Flexner terms the graduate school "the heart of the university", and would, in order to free it from strangling alliances and enable it to carry on its uniquely important work, do away with the college of liberal arts. The revolution in American education demanded by this proposal is by no means the impossible change it would have seemed to be as recently as fifteen years ago, and is probably bound to come—though not, I hope, in the manner contemplated by Dr. Flexner.* Yet in any event achievement of the end he has in view is not only desirable but imperatively necessary. And this end is simply the definitive separation of the graduate school from the other schools of the university.

It would be a greater change than may be generally realized. In all save one of our universities, Johns Hopkins, the graduate school is an outgrowth of the college of liberal arts; and in all save a very few it has, properly speaking, no faculty of its own, and can pretend to little more than a paper—or largely fictitious—existence of its own. The general rule is that any member of any faculty who is permitted to give a "course" which may be credited, by a graduate student, towards a higher non-professional degree is, *ipso facto*, a member of the faculty of the graduate school. By this easy and economical method nearly all graduate school faculties are constituted; and it is, naturally, no wonder that such bodies simply travesty the real work of the graduate school. For that work is probably the most exacting that men perform; yet we compel professors to make it what commercial people term a "side-line"; we entrust it to teachers already overburdened with other and differing duties, who owe immediate allegiance to other schools with very different aims, and who inevitably place the interests of those schools first in their thoughts. We do, in brief, practically everything that can be done to render the real work of the graduate school impossible, while continuing to pay it lip-service—as much of that as one likes!

This is equivalent to sabotage; and sabotage, as a matter of fact, is precisely what must be expected by anyone who, taking seriously the cause of learning, attempts to effect a real separation of the graduate school from the other schools of the university. For those who find their profit in the existing confusion of schools, aims, and work will bitterly oppose every effort to establish a decent orderliness in the academic world. Yet the attempt must be made, and it must succeed; because only when we have graduate schools free from distraction and conflicting aims and impossible burdens of instruction and administration—only when we have graduate schools with an independent existence of their own, assured by faculties owing no other allegiance, and having no interest to serve save the cause of learning—only then will we have universities in reality as well as in name.

V

Essential to the survival of our universities, however, as is the recognition and honest establishment of the real distinctions which I have discussed, and far-reaching though the good effect of this would be, at a time when, as I have said, great changes are in any case bound to come, still, this is not the only step necessary to make our institutions of learning universities in reality as well as in name. Dr. Flexner follows the well-worn pathways of educational criticism in emphasizing several other reforms which he thinks must be consummated. He echoes the chancellor of the University of Paris of seven centuries ago, in renewing the complaint that the machinery of administration exerts a tyrannical sway over us and fritters away far too much of our time. And who can deny it? Perhaps, moreover, it is beneficial to keep the ancient grievance a living issue. But I am

* These questions will be discussed in the later papers of this series.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inclined to pass hastily over this and similar parts of Dr. Flexner's book, because it is the perfectly clear lesson of history that some of the ills of education are perennial—that though unceasing battle against them may be needful, simply to keep them down to a minimum, it will also be in the long run fruitless. Administration will always be too much with us—even though it may not always be so shockingly inefficient and irresponsible as it often is nowadays, when we are required to use the cumbersome methods of political democracy, which afford endless opportunities for acting in one way while talking in another.

The ignorant and incompetent teacher, also, will always be too much with us, often without character, presumptuous, insinuating, and hypocritical; full of fine professions, but aware of his hollowness and thinking always first and anxiously of his job; encouraging and promoting stupid men, when he attains administrative responsibility, because he knows he can manage them. How often, one wonders, have university trustees been asked to make an appointment with the assurance that Dr. Easy-Going or Professor Hard-of-Understanding or Mr. Pusillanimous is "an eminently safe man"?

Salaries, too, will always be lower than we should like them to be—far lower, one will readily agree, than they ought to be, if only all could be made right with the world. Dr. Flexner points out that in recent years, in relation to real values, they have been going down, not up, as they have appeared to be doing; and all that he says on this subject is true enough and, like the rest of his book, admirably expressed. It is as certain, however, as anything can be that the same complaint will have to be made again a century hence, and again two centuries hence, and as long as there are teachers teaching, just as it has always hitherto had to be made, always with manifest justice.

There are, in other words, as I have said, some changes in education which from time to time become fundamentally necessary and *are practicable*; while there are others which in every age have seemed perhaps equally desirable, but which men have never succeeded in accomplishing, or which they have accomplished only for a passing moment or two. And in this discussion of Dr. Flexner's remarkable book—a book destined, as I think it may be, to become a landmark in the history of American education and scholarship—I have tried to fix attention on those of his proposals which are really feasible, and which, if honestly carried out, will suffice to save our universities from the destruction they are now inviting. And of these proposals there remains one to be mentioned, without which those already discussed would largely fail of their intended effect.

It can be stated in a sentence. At present members of our university faculties are job-holders and hired men. Nothing that has been done in recent years—and something has been accomplished, at great expense of time and effort, chiefly by the Association of American University Professors—has essentially altered this fact. It remains strictly true that the most eminent and honored professor in any of our American universities is a salaried employee of the holding corporation exactly as is a bank-clerk, though without even the modern bank-clerk's hope, faint though it may be, of becoming some day a member of the firm. Endless evil consequences flow from this situation, the recital of which would fill many pages. It must suffice here, at the end of a paper already too long, to say merely that the responsibilities of the modern university cannot ever be met by job-holders and hired men. Our university administrators spend their lives in hiring the wrong men, in discovering that they act as job-holders always act, and in concluding that nobody besides themselves is trustworthy or has a proper sense of responsibility, and that they cannot get their money's worth from their hired men except by methods of tacit intimidation. This will doubtless be re-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

garded as the language of exaggeration—and there are, of course, notable exceptions, on both sides of the magic line, amongst the presidents and trustees as well as amongst the hired men—yet it is unfortunately true that any statement less sweeping would be recognized as an understatement by those who really know the facts.

It is, then, for any effectual improvement of present conditions, requisite that university professors be made members in the full sense, and governing members, of the society or corporation of scholars which constitutes the university, and that trustees, if for legal reasons their continuance in office is necessary, be confined to the mere guardianship of the university's endowments and other property, without the power of initiating, reviewing, or vetoing any acts of the governing body of the corporation. No one would contend that autonomy and permanent tenure should thus be extended to all members of university faculties. It should, probably, at present, be confined to the professors (excluding associate professors, adjunct professors, and all below them in rank) of the graduate school, and of the colleges of law and medicine. Whether or not it should also include the professors of the college of liberal arts would depend on what that college is to become, if, indeed, it is to continue to exist at all. At present a few of its professors belong properly to the graduate school, while the majority are really secondary-school teachers.

Though there are as many things to be said for this change as there are evil consequences flowing from the present situation, Dr. Flexner has plainly stated the fundamental and compelling one: "Quite clearly the same conditions that permit idleness, neglect, or perfunctory performance of duty are necessary to the highest exertions of human intelligence. . . . It does not much matter that some persons go to sleep, providing only enough others are wide awake and fertile at the maximum of their powers. The important thing is not that a few persons doze or loaf or are ineffectual; the important thing is that a Hertz, a Maxwell, a Mommsen, and a Gildersleeve find within the university the conditions that suit them as individuals—conditions favourable to their own development and to the development of a varied group of co-workers".

One can hear—how distinctly—the chorus of answers to this: "Come to earth, dear brother! The high-falutin vein might be all very well if you could bring out your Mommsen, or Hertz, or whoever those other fellows were—but where are they? We have never seen any of them, or their like, and we must look at things as they are". The chorus, too, is larger than any body of trustees and presidents—for it contains an even greater number of professors. And only the uninitiated will be surprised; because the distrust of the professor's capacity felt by men of the world is only equalled by the distrust of his capacity felt by all of his colleagues. Will it, then, be utterly vain to protest that this concerted answer expresses precisely the state of mind that renders reformation necessary? Will it be utterly vain to remind our friends that reformation is demanded precisely because the existing conditions make university posts impossible for the best, the greatest men? Will it be utterly vain to remind them that those men are seldom recognized with ease, and never by those who are anxious only to belittle their fellows? Is it necessary, then, in order that the truth should finally become manifest, to discard the very name of the university, as Dr. Flexner is now doing, so as to make it clear that the Institute for Advanced Study which he has been enabled to found is to be—what universities should be, what our universities are failing to be—an institution of learning?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

J. B. PRIESTLEY: SERVANT OF THE COMIC SPIRIT

by Dorothea Lawrance Mann

ARISTOPHANES proved many centuries ago that the most potent weapon of the writer is comedy. The outright attack may be parried, but the comic thrust is really dangerous. A man enjoys remembering the thing at which he has laughed, but the laugh colors his future thoughts on the subject. Your authentic comic writer, as Mr. Priestley himself has pointed out, has a touch of the reformer in his make-up. I am very sure this touch is not lacking in Mr. Priestley himself.

Comedy is an integral part of the English genius. There is significance in the fact that the only one of Shakespeare's greatest characters which was English in origin was Falstaff. Your typical Englishman is not really concerned with the spirits of good and evil which may brood over man. He is not preoccupied intensely with where this world will tend when he himself has left it. He does find quite a number of things wrong with it at the moment and he is interested in the man who wants to set them right. He is especially interested when the man uses comedy as his weapon.

Priestley is English of the old tradition, the tradition which bred a Chaucer, a Shakespeare, a Dr. Johnson. He is one more manifestation of that English genius, deep, strong and earthy. He has almost nothing in common with the fretful complainings and the fantastic urges of this publicity-mad generation. He is truly English in the fact that he is an individualist and is much better at writing than at explaining himself. He is not a radical and he belongs to no schools or movements—even in such attenuated form as these affairs manifest themselves in London. He does not, as he once pointed out, look like a writer. Very few writers do. He is sturdily built and it is much easier to see him as a full back or a batsman than it is to discover him as a poet, an essayist, and a novelist. This, to be sure, is the outward semblance only, the protective coloring of the writer. He is much better at discussing other men than at discussing himself. He has perspective with which to view them and an avid curiosity which has given him a breadth of knowledge of their work such as few possess. With himself he is too much in the midst of an intensely thrilling experience to define adequately what it is all about.

Priestley is a Yorkshireman. He served through the entire period of the war as man and officer with the British army in France. He is separated from his own generation in the fact that these experiences seem to have colored his life so little. His essential sanity has served him well, for we find in him, even when he is most self-revealing, no feeling of belonging to a broken generation, of bewilderment and confusion at being left in the world when so many of his generation were killed, nothing of the effect of the war on a man of creative ability. So far as we can tell he took this experience which con-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sumed four years of his youth as he took the other facts of living, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving and working. He might possibly point out that the sensitive mind of the artist has never been spared contact with brutalities, that young Englishmen of other days faced the Napoleonic Wars, the Civil War, the religious persecutions of the Tudors, the Wars of the Roses. If young Englishmen had waited for peace and quiet and a freedom from brutality and shock, they would never have been able to write at all.

He did not allow the war to change the course of his life. He went up to Cambridge in 1919 when he was twenty-five years old. He had already begun to write, having contributed essays to the *Yorkshire Observer* as a convalescent officer during the war. At the university he took a leading part in journalistic and literary activities, and was winning considerable outside reputation as a parodist. His first two books, *Brief Diversions* and *Papers from Lilliput* were published during this period.

From Cambridge he went to London to be adviser for a large publishing house, but his writing continued. At this time he wrote a series of essays for *The Challenge* which were reprinted in the volume *I for One*. This was the book which first caught the attention of important critics in both England and America. He also wrote critical essays for *The London Mercury*, and his contributions were sought by periodicals in both countries. At this time too his witty reviews of contemporary novels became one of the best features of *The Daily News*. Since he is represented in a number of anthologies his verse also must date from this full and quite significant period.

Priestley is only thirty-six years old, but he is already the author of eighteen books. Moreover, one strong tendency is manifest throughout his work. He has written a book on *English Humour*. His anthology, *Fools and Philosophers*, made up of great comic passages from English literature, has no rival. He is the only man of his age to have written two biographies for the *English Men of Letters Series* and both these biographies, the *Thomas Love Peacock* and the *George Meredith*, are biographies of writers devoted to comedy. His most important critical volume, a very special book in every sense of the word and one which should be very much better known, is *The English Comic Characters*, a study of the great comic figures in English literature. These books show very clearly the trend of Priestley's interests.

Priestley is a fine and discerning critic. It is impossible to read one of his essays on a contemporary without feeling that a veil has been lifted, as though the books have been illumined by a strong light. It is natural enough that there are many to regret that Priestley has abandoned this field of writing. Priestley himself has come to novel-writing, as one might say, by chance. His reputation, his success as an essayist and critic, would have gone far toward convincing any man that he had found his particular field. As he tells it, he started writing stories to amuse himself. Why a writer should undertake more writing as recreation is as baffling to conjecture as why an actor should spend his spare time in going to the theatre. Priestley discovered to his surprise that while every other sort of writing he had done had been a job, work, writing stories was fun.

Adam in Moonshine is evidence of the author's own rollicking delight in telling a story. *Farthing Hall* was a novel in letters written in collaboration with his good friend, Hugh Walpole. *The Old Dark House* introduced Priestley as a novelist to the United States, but his last two novels, *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement*, are completely out of the class of the earlier work. Their success has been amazing in this country but nothing like so amazing as the success they have had in England. To have a three-dollar novel among the best sellers in America in a bad book season was an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

achievement, but that a novel selling at a correspondingly high price in England should sell 150,000 copies simply staggers the hearer. The part played by lending libraries in England has generally had the effect of limiting the number of the sales, so that we are not in the habit of even looking for sales of this size in England. It is doubtful if any novel of that price has ever before had such a sale there. The very title of *The Good Companions* caught the imagination of the public so thoroughly that it swept the country. It became a good omen to name a new enterprise—a shop, a tea-room—even lingerie —"The Good Companions".

The success of *The Good Companions* in England immediately reminded people of the furor raised in England over the publication of *The Pickwick Papers*. The few superficial similarities—such as humor, the wealth and variety of character, and the originality of nomenclature—led to the immediate and continued assertion that Priestley is like Dickens. Despite the fact that there still exists in some quarters a feeling for Dickens which is almost idol-worship, the comparison was unfortunate. It was always unfortunate that Mrs. Wharton was compared to Henry James. Any novelist worth reading continuously is like himself and like no one else. To press such a comparison is to keep the reader forever looking for what is not there and neglecting what is. There is all the difference between the Victorian Age and the present day between Dickens and Priestley. Dickens was the fine flower of the Victorian Age. Even Tennyson did not represent the theatricality of that age so completely as Dickens. Dickens gets his effects by drawing his characters always just a little out of proportion. No matter how entertaining they are, they belong in Dickens's novels and not in the world. Priestley's method is quite the opposite. He belongs to a period which has made a fetish of realism and Priestley's effort, you feel always, is to picture his characters exactly as real men and women. Mr. Priestley has been criticized for repudiating the comparison. As well criticize red for objecting that it is not like blue!

There is, rather, the difference between Dickens and Priestley that exists between humor and comedy. Dickens burlesques his characters slightly so that you may appreciate how funny they are. Priestley's characters are funny in being themselves and you realize in them just as they are how they differ from the norm which spells happiness and success for a man or woman. This tendency of Priestley's is much more marked in *Angel Pavement* than in *The Good Companions*.

That office in *Angel Pavement* reveals how carefully Priestley keeps to the restraints of comedy. Every character there would have been fatally easy to burlesque—the well-meaning but unprogressive employer who has never outlived pride in his school; the careful, anxious cashier with his voluble wife and the children he does not understand; Miss Matfield living in her club for women and finding it increasingly difficult to make her life seem romantic to her companions; Poppy, the ambitious little cockney typist, with her eyes open for everything and all too ready to fall in love with the clerk; that drab clerk, Turgis, who escapes from the dinginess of his actual life into rose-colored romantic dreams; and the office boy who wants to be a detective and is always late in returning from his errands because he has been "shaddering" people. Two things are evident. Priestley is an amazingly accurate observer. He is at the same time critic and reformer, for I think at heart the critic is always the reformer. There is no question of the liveliness of Priestley's imagination, but he does not depend on his imagination for details. He writes of places and things and people he has seen. Part of this observation of details is conscious, part no doubt has become habit. The trained observer must always be storing up details for future use, just as no doubt Mr. Priestley is forever

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

noting the odd names which distinguish his characters. Only so could much that is found in these novels be explained.

When he is getting ready to write a novel Priestley forsakes his usual haunts and occupations and spends long hours in wandering about by himself in odd places. He does this, he states, for the purpose of driving his mind in upon itself in order that it shall begin to create. When the solitude has finally started the process of creation he shuts himself up at home and writes every day, spending hours upon hours at his work and seeing no one except his wife and children. It seems likely, however, that these periods of wandering about also bear fruit in helping him to discover types, for he is one of those writers whose minor characters as well as their major characters are interesting. We feel we should recognize Mrs. Smeeth's cousin Fred, who always gives her such a good laugh and who takes poor Mr. Smeeth's best hat to use in his comedy-sketch; or Evelyn Ansdell at the Burpenfield Club, who has to choose between her mother and father; or Lilian Matfield's Norman; or Mr. Oakroyd's son's friend Albert; or even Mrs. Cross, the charwoman. These characters whose actual part in the scheme of things is so small are yet created with the same fidelity which marks the major characters.

Mr. Priestley has said on several different occasions that every great novelist's chief interest lay in character. This is abundantly true in his own case. He is moreover very skilful in picturing what Yeats once called "the crooked road of life". These two interests—characters and the way in which characters follow the crooked road of life—make it almost axiomatic that with Priestley plot structure is negligible. In *The Good Companions* the entire story is strung upon the vicissitudes of the troupe of strolling players whom Miss Trant undertakes to finance and manage. The ending of the story is arbitrary. It had to have an end. Consequently Mr. Priestley set his imagination to work to produce a scene which will end it successfully. His rounding out of the various threads of story is just as arbitrary. It is not the inevitable outcome of what has preceded it, though it satisfies the readers' feelings of what they would like to have happen to characters of whom they have become fond. There is a jolly insouciance about it which is distinctly pleasing. Similarly Mr. Golspie's stay in England is the thread upon which the incidents of *Angel Pavement* are hung. There is somewhat more careful construction here, but Mr. Priestley's own love of adventure rides over the idea of motivation. He thoroughly enjoys picking up a character unexpectedly and sending him on a novel adventure. He adores coincidence and novelty and this book actually has almost as arbitrary an ending as the earlier book. Not quite so arbitrary, because we have been told that Mrs. Dersingham's bad temper toward Lena Golspie was to cost her husband dearly. So, though Golspie's and Lena's longing for fresh adventure and new scenes is actually the force which serves to terminate Golspie's stay in London, his going brings ruin to the firm and incidentally misfortune to those innocent persons who worked for the firm. Both stories abound in action, but this action belongs to separate incidents and only in the most casual fashion to the central plot structure.

These separate incidents are exceedingly effective and are developed with an extraordinary care for detail. Any single scene, upon careful analysis, startles us with the genuine humanity with which the most insignificant character is endowed. Many of their conversations reveal Priestley's surprising insight. Can we forget the scene of Mrs. Dersingham's dinner, a dinner fated from the beginning but whose effects might not have been so devastating if Mrs. Dersingham had played the game better? There is no burlesque here. Nearly all women must have known moments when events got too much for them and it would have been easier to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

give up the struggle and metaphorically to kick and scream like a child in a tantrum. Nothing about Mrs. Dersingham is out of drawing, her inefficient management of her help, her attitude toward her neighbors, her demands for admiration from her husband, her silly pretence of the multitude of her engagements which deceives no one. Even her outburst is natural. She has provocation enough, whatever folly it may be to let one's nerves get out of control. Mrs. Smeeth's party, on which she spends several weeks' housekeeping money, is quite as vivid an affair as Mrs. Dersingham's dinner. We can actually see that party with the wearisome perpetual joker who is "the life of the party", and the disgusting, spoiled child who is for Mr. Smeeth the last straw. And how much of real life is reflected in that after-the-party moment when Mrs. Smeeth, flushed with pride, wants to sit down and talk over the success of her party, utterly obtuse as regards her husband's actual and warranted feeling toward her relatives.

What a triumph of comedy is to be found in Miss Matfield's evening with Norman. First there is the pretence to her companions at the Club in order that they may imagine the occasion romantic. How many a poor dinner is reflected in that account of her dinner with Norman at the foreign restaurant in Soho—"one of those good little places" which are continually being recommended by people who seem to know nothing whatever about food except the price—where Norman enjoys the atmosphere and Miss Matfield hopes that the Burgundy will make up for the deficiencies of the dinner. Then there is the music hall where Norman gets into the wrong seats and they have to leave the orchestra stalls for the balcony under the mocking eyes of Mr. Golspie. So miserable is Miss Matfield at the fiasco of her evening that had Norman pressed his love in the taxi she would have abandoned London gladly rather than have to face her associates again. Norman even now is unsatisfactory, however, for he is weakly amorous rather than aggressively conquering. Miss Matfield is one of the best woman characters Priestley has ever done. She is picked out with the beaming light of comedy which shows her folly without sentiment or pathos.

Priestley is not really a critic of the social scene. Individuals fascinate him and he is a critic of individuals. The complicated structure of English society which we feel so strongly in Walpole's work is almost absent in Priestley's. To be sure Miss Trant belongs to a different social class from even Inigo Jollifant. Dersingham has been to a public school, even though it is not an especially good one. Still these things play small part. Priestley's interest is in the individual's adjustment to life rather than his adjustment to the social structure. One of the triumphs of his treatment of the individual is in the figure of Miss Trant, the woman on the verge of middle age who, suddenly free of responsibilities, longs for adventure. Almost any other novelist writing today would have given her some sort of a sex adventure. Priestley gives Miss Trant her full measure of adventures—strange people, strange places, strange responsibilities, the risking of money she cannot afford to risk, the inside of a life utterly alien from anything she has ever known, continual movement, and the unexpected. Sex and religion, those twin columns upon which Shaw once balanced a world, play almost equally no part in Priestley's books. Naturally, Miss Trant has a gorgeous time. Then, being at heart a romantic—like so many of his countrymen—Priestley brings back the lover she has cherished in her heart—without apparently much warrant for such cherishing—through the years. He brings him back in improbable and outrageous fashion, as only a romantic could do, dropping him from the skies like a fairy prince at precisely the right moment. And everyone is satisfied because Mr. Priestley has got them in the mood for romance.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They like to feel that Miss Trant is going to be happy forever afterward!

Priestley does not write autobiographical fiction, but as in the case of every true novelist his fiction is the extension of his own personality. The ideas, impulses, desires, shown in the books reveal something with regard to the novelist himself. His is the fiction of a man who has found life good. He has a zest for living which is shown clearly in most of his more important characters. They want something of adventure to keep life interesting but they ask no ultimate reality, are obsessed by no overshadowing spirits of good or evil. They are content with the ordinary satisfactions of this world—money enough, a little love, a few good times, a touch of adventure. Mr. Priestley is now in what doubtless critics of the future will call his middle period. In one of the essays which date from an earlier period he has told us that as he grew up, he was overwhelmed by the dogmatism of the men who preceded him, Shaw, Wells, Belloc, Chesterton and Bennett. They were always expressing themselves with the utmost certainty. They changed their opinions at times but they were equally certain about their new opinions. He himself at this time found it hard to be a man of opinion. In this middle period of his Mr. Priestley seems intent on accepting life as it is. In part, of course, this is the spirit of the post-war period which is content in asking no more than a chance to enjoy life, without settling all its problems as the older men had wanted to do. It is difficult to believe that Priestley, with his restless mind, his lively curiosity, will stay in this mood. I think it is even possible to see a change in him between *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement*. Though he has confounded those who have asserted that the writing of criticism spoils an author for writing fiction, I think he will not be able to escape all the habits bred in him by his critical writing. He is dogmatic; he is a reformer at heart, though he accomplishes his purpose through wit and humor and comedy. On the other hand if we can deduce anything whatever from the work Mr. Priestley has already done, we can feel certain that his interest lies too completely in people as people to allow him to fall into the error of Wells or Huxley or Sinclair Lewis in allowing his people ever to become mere personifications of his ideas.

Here and there we discover some action of his characters which places them in the twentieth century. At an earlier period Miss Trant's relatives might have been able to do more than disapprove of her unconventionality, or Miss Matfield might not have had the Burpenfield Club in which to live. In larger aspects however his people dwell in an eternal England. They have not the modern nerves of Galsworthy's and Walpole's characters. It may be of course that all this vibration to the tempo of the twentieth century belongs only to classes of people of whom Mr. Priestley has not chosen to write. I think however that the real cause lies deep in the author's own attitude toward life. He comes from Yorkshire just as Mr. Oakroyd does and he is as sturdily English. He is neither shaken nor doubtful nor profoundly pessimistic, as are so many of the men of his day. You feel in him and in his books the sturdiness of an England which is unconquered by time or circumstance. It is impossible to believe that he will be greatly changed no matter into what part of the world his adventuring spirit takes him. Similarly it would be hard to imagine Priestley's novels as consistently mirroring anything except "this happy breed of men . . . this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England". There is nothing metaphysical about him, nothing mystical, neither nature nor religion lures him greatly, but he stands solid and satisfying, almost tranquil, in the midst of a world of men and women, finding it good and extraordinarily interesting even in the moments when he is forced to disapprove it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CRITICISM OUTSIDE NEW YORK

by Donald Davidson

SEVEN years are a long enough life for a literary editor, I suppose, in a Jack-and-Jill civilization where tumblings and cracked crowns are the natural sequel of climbings that must always be insecure. If they are not long enough to make a man wise, they will probably suffice to make him detest foolishness and to mingle a little caution with the fits of enthusiasm and disgust that too much book-reviewing begets.

I can claim no ultimate wisdom in the matter. I can only say that I reviewed books in Tennessee for seven years, and during the same period persuaded a great many people to do likewise. The book page that I edited had a very modest beginning in 1924 in the Nashville *Tennessean*. At the suggestion of John H. Nye, managing editor of the *Tennessean*, I consented at first to act simply as a "clearing-house" whose function was to hand out books to reviewers and turn in reviews for Sunday publication. After a while, by a process that amounted almost to usurpation, I became a literary editor with a regular department—*A Page About Books* appearing once a week. The fortunes of this page waxed and waned with the fortunes of my erstwhile employer, Colonel Luke Lea, who during the last two of the seven years published the page also in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* and the Knoxville *Journal*. At this height of good fortune the page circulated in five states—Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Alabama.

During the seven years I must have reviewed at least a thousand books myself—a total of words, passed into the oblivion of newsprint, which would equal the content of several good-sized volumes. I have handled and given to others probably ten thousand books; written how many thousands of letters I know not; corrected in vain hope of typographical perfection, bushels and bales of printer's galleys; stayed late of nights and got up at indecent hours of mornings to attend to page proofs and matrices; interviewed or eluded authors, major and minor; wheedled, flattered, damned, and thanked the always mysterious beings who determine whether review copies shall or shall not be furnished; answered queries from people I had never heard of, about authors I had never read; settled wagers as to whether Du Bose Heyward and Julia Peterkin are white or colored; escaped, or failed to escape, ambitious youth and wistful age with manuscripts or privately printed books in pocket; stolen hours from personal business to read books I forgot within a week; irritated my family by late arrivals and sudden departures; accumulated a library on the principle of pure opportunity—I am thankful that it includes a number of excellent cook books, which will solace my declining years more than first editions.

From some points of view, it is an ordinary enough record. Harry Hansen, with his tens of thousand, can easily put my mere thou-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sands to shame. But it represents the sweat and fervor of a Southern literary editor's work, which was accomplished for the first four or five years without an office or office help other than what overworked stenographers of the editorial staff could give at intervals; and which could not have been accomplished at all without the assistance in earlier days of William Kingsbury and in the last two years of Edd Winfield Parks.

But such details, various and exciting as they have been to me, make only the background. They are a title to knowledge of a sort, but my argument is not in them. I am concerned rather with certain speculations as to what a Southern book editor may and may not do in his own province; or as to what any such editor, outside the metropolitan areas, may do to justify his existence.

II

The provincial literary editor turns out his page a week under handicaps that would throw a Humanist critic into a fit of chills and fever. Whatever the final product, his actual working methods are a perfect example of motion perpetually lost and of decorum eternally foundered in petty exasperations. Nine times out of ten, his book page editing is a part-time job, for no managing editor in his senses would think of giving a book editor an equal status with a sports editor or a society editor. So he is generally an editorial writer, or a Sunday editor, or sometimes merely a copy-reader or a reporter, who does the book page on the side; or, as is more and more getting to be the case, he is a college professor who is called in to furnish a little genteel window-dressing for the comic strips and the murder stories. Probably he has no clerical help, except what he can beg or pay for out of his own pocket. He must write his own letters, which will be numerous if he really keeps up with the new books and his reviewers; and more than likely, if he mails out review copies to selected critics instead of casually handing them out to staff members and friends, he will have to do the wrapping and posting himself. Merely the physical handling of the books is a trial to the flesh, for at the height of the spring and fall seasons they come in by the cart-load and must be put in decent order. They must above all be put in a safe place, away from the casual thievery of the staff, who will think nothing of walking off with anything from a Zane Grey novel to Colonel House's memoirs.

But such minor afflictions are nothing in comparison with the major ones, quite out of the class of inconveniences. These all come from the fact that books are published mainly in New York, which is located in a sort of No Man's Land claimed by the United States but belonging only technically within their jurisdiction.

The provincial literary editor is a thousand or two miles away from this crankily located "center". Advance copies of important books reach him belatedly, or not at all. He cannot be as prompt in his reviewing as the New York literary sheets, because he does not have their space and their facilities. From the flood of books that reach him, accompanied by bales of chatty "publicity notes" and all imaginable promotional devices, he is made aware that the publishing world of New York is not geared to his tempo. Apparently it is geared to suit the pace of a monstrous book-consuming machine that ravenously demands a fresh banquet of best-sellers every day in the week. The impression he gets is that people in the metropolitan areas spend the greater part of their waking hours in reading books. With a public so voracious, it is no wonder that New York reviewing is reduced to the desperate formula of recommending books as fast as the books appear. Reviewers become professional shopping guides, because they must.

In the South, the public is not so eager. At times the editor may wonder whether it has any appetite at all. When it perks up and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shows an interest in its victuals, the editor knows that the victuals have been sealed and recommended in New York. When this book becomes a best-seller and that book a worst-seller, he can discover little evidence as to whether his own opinions have mattered. He guesses that publishers do not base their estimates on any approval he may give, and that booksellers do not wait upon his remarks to do their buying.

Then why should he exist at all? Can he be anything but a humble satellite of New York, repeating meekly, in his own distant orbit, the equinoctial procession of its blazing fashions?

To such questions my general answer would be a defense of provincialism. Without underestimating the power of New York and without denying that its influence is often beneficent, I should still hold that it is a perversion of function for the provincial editor to consider his book page simply an irrigating ditch, wholly obedient and conductive, through which the arts and learning of the metropolis gurgle into the sterile hinterland. Circumstances compel him to be an outsider, and he might as well never pretend to be anything else. Let him be an outsider, with all the force and discretion he can muster. Let him be a Westerner or a Southerner, frankly but not overbearingly. He need not rage against the sins of Babylon in order to cherish the integrity of his own Jerusalem, but he does need to keep his self-respect in the only way possible to honest men. The vague quality called "point of view"—reputed to be so prized of critics—will then be his without seeking, as much a native part of him as the accent and features he got from his own father, from his own land and people.

Of such provincial independence, however, one will naturally demand that it be effective. This is a hard demand to make, because effectiveness can never be proved by statistics. Yet I have grounds for believing that the provincial literary editor can be effective —and often is—if he will be quite patient, quite content to see the years go by without any display of quick and tangible results.

Certain limits must be granted. Publishers' lists are made up in New York and in Europe. They are bound to reflect the New York estimate of what the public wants and what it ought to want. That this is often a narrow estimate, even when it is most shrewd, the provincial editor knows all too well. It is self-evident that New York sells its wares to the provinces without being very well acquainted with the various kinds of people that live, die, and occasionally read books in the vast region that lies outside of a circle described with a hundred mile radius from New York. But if he is defending his right to provincialism, he cannot very well deny New York's right to its own provincialism, which is simply a coat of another color. He cannot change New York.

This apparent impotence will not matter very much if he reflects that his duty as a critic—and as an editor—leads in exactly the direction toward which his natural self-respect has already inclined him. The critic must have a wide-open mind—that is true. But independence is as needful as catholicity. If one can judge from the evidence, critical independence may be harder to win and harder to keep in New York than in the provinces where the critic is exposed to few temptations, hidden or open. To be independent and to be provincial, in this sense, are the same thing. Remoteness becomes, after all, a kind of good fortune, if he knows how to use it well.

He cannot be prompt to the minute in reviewing books. Very well, then, let him practise deliberation, within reasonable limits. Does he know few of the modern authors at sight? All the better reason for having little personal bias for or against them. He has no fear of disfavor from the great and the powerful, and is not much annoyed with the importunities of the little. If he doesn't like Mr. So-and-So's novel, he can say so

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without fear of political consequences. There is equally little reason for him to ignore merit because it happens to be unfashionable or unpromoted. He canot be seduced, even unconsciously, by publishers' advertising, because publishers do not advertise in his page.

If these things are not true of every provincial literary editor, they ought to be. I believe they are oftener true than not, and so far as they are true they point toward an independence which in time may have a healthy effect. I do not look for any open schism, which will vent itself in a series of violent secessionist movements, assembled around the banners of provincial literary editors engaging in a species of guerilla warfare against New York. But imagine fifty provincial literary editors, in as many cities, devoting themselves independently, with a corps of independent-minded reviewers, to the most obvious task of a book page, which is to criticize books and care nothing at all whether the books sell or whether the opinions are quoted. Imagine such a condition—and one can guess what a checking, balancing effect it would have upon publishing and criticism in New York, which nowadays simply attempts to sell the provinces what the New York reviewers and publishers happen to like. In that direction—a winding road, very long and quiet—lies the legitimate way of the provincial literary editor. It is a way of being "effective". It is his only reason for existing.

III

From a newspaper standpoint, one of the tests of the popularity of a feature is the quantity of letters from readers who volunteer abuse or applause—it does not greatly matter which, so long as they write in. A "colyumist" of my acquaintance gets such letters literally by the barrel; he keeps several barrels in his cellar to put them in. A literary editor enjoys no such profusion of correspondence. His efforts, no matter how earnest or blasphemous, are generally received in utter silence. He is left to carry on in a kind of negative bliss, presuming that silence indicates no disapproval and that, as long as there is not outcry for his ejection, he must be behaving himself acceptably.

Yet he has a fair notion about the people who compose his audience, since he mingles with them a good deal and can guess what their attitudes are. He can divide them, in his mind, into three groups.

First, there are the strictly fashionable crowd, who read the new books simply to keep up, without caring much whether the books are good or bad. All they want is to have the new books on the table, or to patter brightly about them in the monthly "discussion group". For these folks, the local book page is a supererogation. They read the New York reviews and accept what is said. Or they subscribe to a book club and take what is sent. Probably they feel a little superior, on the whole, toward the local book page. They like to feel metropolitan, or they think quite seriously that New York knows what is fitting and proper for "cultured" circles.

At the opposite extreme are honest provincials who read only the local book page if they read any. By and large, these are of the order of a Mississippi gentleman who wrote me with disarming frankness; "I always peruse your page with interest, but I seldom read books any more. I read the page more to learn the trend of opinion than to select reading matter". These people make up a very large group, from whom the provincial literary editor may hope to make a few dubious converts. But the support they give is a little too casual to be satisfying.

For the purpose of establishing an informed and independent provincial opinion, a third group is the most important. These are persons of education and sensibility who "keep up", like the club-women and the best-seller infatuates, but with reserve and deliberation. They are slow to buy books. They do not join book clubs. They do not make a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fuss over fashions, and are not rushed off their feet very easily. Secretly or openly, they are a little dissatisfied with New York opinion, detecting in it, perhaps, a certain amount of hollowness and chitter-chatter. Without defining their attitudes very precisely, they are really ripe for rebellion and need little encouragement to make themselves felt.

These are the people for whom a provincial book page can really mean something. They offer a nucleus, if only a nucleus as yet, for building up an expressive and sympathetic body of readers who in turn will influence other readers and form at last a bloc of literary Jeffersonians ready to conspire against the complacent literary Hamiltonianisms of our day.

The problem of the provincial literary editor is to diminish the size of the first group by jarring its complacency, and to increase the size of the third group by additions from the first and second.

But no perfunctory handling of books will avail to achieve this end. Nor will any solo editorial performance, however brilliant and passionate, be enough in itself. The provincial book page must be as good in quality as the New York reviewing sheets; if possible, it must be better. The provincial editor must be a real editor. He must attract the services of able reviewers who will have public respect and who will give his page, week in and week out, a consistent excellence. If he is able to enlist such people, he will be doing something more than acquainting an invisible public with the new books. He will be affording provincial criticism an outlet. He will provide a forum of literary opinion where unprofessional critics may try out their ideas in print. Gradually, with many haltings and backslidings, his reviewers and he may shape provincial opinion until it is not only in touch with modern literature but expressive of itself.

Provincial reviewers are not so glib or knowing as the happiness boys and girls who discover new masterpieces every week in the columns of New York periodicals; but they are also less bored, less opinionated, possibly more painstaking. They review books for what the books are worth, because it never occurs to them to do anything else. They are undistracted, they have leisure and freedom, they have no ax to grind.

That is, when they can be discovered and put to work, their best work is of this order. Even their bad work is likely to be honest work. The great vice of provincial reviewing, of course, is its perfunctoriness and shallowness. I know that a great deal of this kind of reviewing exists, but I am not talking about blurb-copying, female sentimentalizing, all the petty practices that are an affliction to the authors, the public, and the publishers.

I do not say it with any particular pride; it was always obvious enough that a diligent book page editor need not condone such practices. It was always easy, in fact surprisingly easy, to secure a good review for a worthy book. During my seven years of up-and-down, I suppose there were as many as three or four hundred individuals on my list of reviewers. The marvel was that these people, many of them busy persons, were apparently ready enough, upon my simple request, to drop their work and write a book review—for which, after the inconsiderate fashion of provincial newspapers, they got no pay except the possession of the book. In my editorial solicitations I tried to keep this in mind. If the reviewers were to have only the books, then they ought to have the books they wanted, and I catered to their private tastes, so that for this man I helped build up a library of travel books, for that one religion, for another one Proust, and so on.

Of course some of the reviewers were writers who from time to time contributed to national periodicals. The first number of the page ever issued contained reviews by Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom. Other authors who reviewed occasionally or frequently were Edwin Mims, William S. Knickerbocker, Newbell Niles Puckett, Kate

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trimble Sharber, Grant C. Knight, Nicholas Van der Pyl, William E. Barton, Roy L. Garis, Robert Penn Warren, G. B. Winton, John D. Wade—poets, biographers, novelists, academicians, if not professional critics. But there were many other quite unprofessional persons whose work was equally good and just as faithful, people for the most part unknown outside their own locale. I recall no better estimates of Cabell, anywhere, than those written by Jesse Wills for my page. I doubt whether Mr. Canby or Mrs. Van Doren get many reviews of better quality than those that were done for me by Elizabeth Wheatley, Lacy Lockert, Ruth F. Moore, Ellene Ransom, Richard S. West, Sue White, Henry B. Kline, Dorothy Yarnell, Abbott Martin.

On the whole I am inclined to think that the amateur reviewers, when they have the knack, are preferable to professional ones, because they are more impressed with the obligation of doing a good review (not necessarily a favorable one) and have not yet learned the sad lesson that criticism is one of the most impermanent and least respected forms of writing. This is particularly true of the young people in the first flush of literary enthusiasm, who have just discovered that they can write and are foolish enough to think book reviewing a good beginning. To these I gave all possible encouragement. They were often a mainstay when the graybeards failed me, and their reviewing often put the graybeards to shame. Perhaps one of the best by-products of the page was the opportunity it afforded these young people to quicken their literary interest and try out, for what it was worth, the kind of writing that a book page permits.

But their importunities were sometimes embarrassing. Sometimes there were college students who could do better writing than the very professors under whom they were supposed to be studying. I published reviews —good ones—from a sophomore at the University of Tennessee long before I discovered her immature station in life. Finally I had to make a rule that I would assign no books to undergraduates. It would not do to have reverend age and ebullient youth joggling each other too intimately on a book page.

There was never any lack of reviewers, excellent reviewers, willing and eager to write for no pay, ready to thank me humbly for the "privilege" of doing reviews, or glad to write out of a sense of public duty. They were people of all sorts and stations: college presidents, editors, lawyers, judges, insurance and bond salesmen, authors, club-women, housewives, clergymen, gentlemen farmers, army officers, teachers, politicians, and of course college professors. The reviewers were distributed in all parts of the South, with a sprinkling from the East and Middle West, but most of them, of course, represented the western South and might be taken as a cross-section of it. Through them it was possible to make the book page, over a course of years, an expression of intelligent Southern opinion in regard to books—and perhaps in regard to the questions, social, political, religious, that the books of these turbulent years raised.

IV

In the earlier days of the page, when review copies came but sparsely in response to my fitful pleadings, it was easy to review all the books that came in. I had too fine a conscience then. It seemed to me that whatever somebody had gone to enormous trouble in writing and printing ought to have a notice, even though a disapproving one. Inevitably, fine conscience was blunted and replaced by something that may have been either wisdom, cynicism, or practicality. In the last four or five of my seven years, books came in ever increasing numbers. It was impossible to review all the half-worthy or the nearly good books. It was hard enough, it was almost impossible to get around even to the apparently deserving ones within a decent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

period. Before the fall books could be assigned and reviewed, they were obscured by a tide of spring books in full spate. In November the ardent publishers hurl masterpiece after masterpiece at the book editor, and dutifully he crams his copy-folder with reviews that will take him three months or more to finish printing. But in January the publishers are already assuring him that the books of the fall are faded and gone.

The literary editor's task is not lightened at all by the system, or rather the lack of system, which a great many publishers use in sending out review copies. During the latter years of my experience I tried to solve the problem in part by furnishing each important publisher with a list of titles, chosen from catalogues. With about half the publishers this arrangement worked rather well on the whole. To the other half, the preference of the local editor meant nothing, and books arrived for review, or did not arrive, in a perfectly insane fashion. Some of the publishers—especially the older, more conservative houses—studied rather carefully the peculiarities of the local page; but these were few enough. We always had a plethora of books that were not worth reviewing or that we were not interested in reviewing—a book on Yiddish hymnology, or a history of Gloucester, Massachusetts, or the speech defects of school-children in Brooklyn high schools, or German diction in singing. And we were always missing important books, frequently books of local interest, for no intelligible cause, and being greeted, upon complaint, with a formula—"Our supply of review copies is exhausted", or a quarrelsome "Our records show that this book was sent you . . ."

Publishers should know their own business, and, having enjoyed many courtesies at their hands, I feel sufficiently respectful toward them. I know how complicated and elusive their business is, and I understand how they must study sales sheets. But I shall never be able to comprehend an economy that will permit one publisher to send for review the two hefty volumes of James's *Charles W. Eliot* and will forbid another to furnish *The Adams Family*. I can recall getting numerous review copies of obscure Scandinavian or Polish novels from a certain publisher and missing entirely a novel by a Tennessean, published by the same firm. I remember being refused a review copy of the diary of President Polk—whose tomb is a few steps away from the newspaper I worked for; but I was always getting diaries or biographies of other worthies in whom I could take no possible interest.

Occasional quarrels and disappointments over review copies are minor irritations. But the provincial editor's general experience makes him inevitably aware of some weaknesses in the publishing system. Book publishers go blithely about their seasonal enthusiasms like so many manufacturers of automobiles and millinery, chirping continually about new models in biography, fiction, and pseudo-science; but they seem to know the manufacturing end only. They know little about the book-consumers—who they are, or where they are, or what they are like. When the market fails to absorb a publisher's wares, he seems to think something very mysterious is in the wind. It is a "bad market" for books, and that is all he can say.

The provincial editor is not concerned with sales, which are somebody else's business entirely. But he can see some of the troubles. Strangely enough, many reasonably well educated people, after reading a book review, have no idea as to how to go about buying the book in question. They have forgotten that books are sold in book-stores, or do not know where the book-stores are. To make matters worse, a vast number of potential book-buyers have been educated to think of only two varieties of books: school books and library books. The free school system may have taught them to respect books, but it has not taught them to want to own books. They have been subtly led to believe, instead,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution imply that books are to be furnished, like roads and farm relief, as a sort of communal right. They are encouraged in this belief by modern architects, who do not include private libraries among the appurtenances of the average American home.

Furthermore, in the South at least, the population is still mainly agricultural. It includes many Negroes, and many persons both white and black who do well to read a newspaper. This population, being agricultural, lacks spending money, and if it had the money, it would have no inclination to invest it in books. Yet when all these classes of non-readers and book-borrowers are subtracted, there remain enough people to make a good-sized body of book-consumers. Still the publishers complain. Figures prove, they say, that the South buys only 5½% to 7½% of the books issued from New York—a bad showing in comparison with other sections.

I do not trust these figures implicitly. They do not include the purchases that many Southerners make by mail directly from Brentano's and other metropolitan stores. They do not include, I imagine, the orders that Southern booksellers place directly with book-jobbers like Baker and Taylor. And they are calculations for *new* books only, and therefore are not a complete commentary on reading habits. Besides, they take only quantity into account, and are no measure of quality. For publishers assume, with pardonable vanity perhaps, that all their wares are of uniform excellence. If the South does not buy their books profusely, then the fault must be the South's, and nothing could possibly be wrong with the books offered for sale! I should like to think that the South's taste is the main ruling factor here; I am afraid it is not, but it would certainly be proper to argue that the reading public of the South is not so easily "panicked" as the more congested centers of population. Its tendencies are conservative. It is slow to take up the more violent modernities.

But when the South makes up its mind to buy, it will keep on buying indefinitely. If Aunt Emma once decides that Sinclair Lewis is all right, she will get every Sinclair Lewis novel that comes out; and she will see that Cousin Sue and Uncle George get copies at Christmas-time and on birthdays. It is the quick turnover, the dizzy shifting from fad to fad between seasons, that finds the South most unresponsive. I am unable to shed many tears over this reluctance to be stampeded. I shudder at the thought of book publishers "developing" the Southern market in the fashion apparently contemplated by Mr. Melrich V. Rosenberg in a recent article in the *Publishers' Weekly*. "The trade in the South", he says, "has yet to concern itself seriously with the aggressive merchandising of books." And I hope it never will, if "aggressive merchandizing" means a lot of noise and hurrah about one's duty to civilization and one's obligation to culture, which one presently discovers is the obligation to buy Skeezick's new series, "Novels in the Nude", as highly recommended by the usual group of sponsors.

The truth is, I have found myself in tight corners at times, when called on to suggest current books for the reading of gentle ladies, brought up with Victorian decorum, or good country gentlemen like the farmer I used to know, who made it a rule to re-read *A Tale of Two Cities* every autumn when he fired his tobacco and had to stay up all night. When the lady from upstairs used to call on me and ask for something to read of a winter evening, it was embarrassing to discover that practically every novel on my shelves was an improper book. When I went a hundred miles into the country to visit my father, what could I possibly take him, in the way of current reading, that would compete with Shakespeare, the Plutarch, the Thackeray, that he knew so well? For the lady upstairs I might occasionally manage a Booth Tarkington or a Galsworthy. For my father there was nearly always some biog-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raphy and history of more or less merit; but I shrank from offering him *The World of William Clissold* or *My Life* or *Marriage and Morals*. It may have been my own innate conservatism that restrained me; it may have been an unconscious admission that Wells was after all no adequate substitute for Thackeray, and that Isadora Duncan and Bertrand Russell were featherweights in comparison with Plutarch and Shakespeare. Coming right down to it, I was inclined to be a little ashamed of some branches of modern literature before my own people, no matter how boldly I championed it in print. And for all I know there may be some fundamental division of taste between the literary East and the provincial South, not particularly to the discredit of either section, but a profound division nevertheless, a chasm not to be easily bridged by venders of books who believe fanatically in "salesmanship" simply because salesmanship works in the metropolitan areas.

Even so, grant that the situation is as bad as can be from the publisher's standpoint; I fancy they will never improve it much by their present procedure. Their one hope is in the bookstores, whose scanty numbers they are doing much to diminish and nothing to increase. Your Southern reader, I think, is not yet ready (if he ever will be) to respond buoyantly to mass sales schemes. He wants to know his book-seller, and he wants his book-seller to know him (or her). When he comes into the store, he wants to be called by his right name. He wants to gossip, to consult and be consulted. The buying of a book must be a personal and intimate transaction. The bookseller's success rests largely on building up a clientele of persons whose family histories, profession, tastes he knows as well as he knows his stock.

Against this inclination, which means a small and dispersed but a very steady trade, the publishing system unfortunately throws its whole weight. The extraordinary policy of pushing nothing but "new" books, as if books were as perishable as chewing-gum and automobiles, is discouraging to the bookseller, who cannot possibly carry every item in stock. The remote high-and-mightiness of some publishers; their repeated errors in handling orders and shipments; the compartmentalizing of their business—which means, often, the handling of correspondence by subordinates who know neither the geography of the United States nor the contents of the books they are publishing; their deadly opportunism in permitting the rise of book clubs that cut heavily into booksellers' trade; their eagerness to rush books into cheap reprints while expensive editions are still on bookstore shelves; their general unacquaintance with the South, or with any part of the United States outside New York —all this hurts the booksellers just as it frets and hampers the book-editor.

Two or three times a year—sometimes less often—the publisher's field agents make the rounds of bookstores (at least of those that still have good credit) and struggle against conditions as best they may. These are generally sensible and gallant souls, with a passion often for good literature. They lug huge suitcases around in tropical weather and cover, in gigantic leaps, a territory half as big as Europe. They are well liked, and they are well received; but they touch only a few cities, and hastily at the best. Their salesmanship is not much helped by the fact that they frequently are obliged to solicit orders for books they have never read—probably because the manuscript has not been received at the publisher's office, and the book exists only as a dummy.

It is a strange, almost a messy business. I have no solution for it. But one recommendation might be made. If the heads of the publishing houses would occasionally omit one of several annual jaunts to Europe, and journey through the highways and byways of their own country instead, they might profit a good deal. They would at least learn the map of the United States.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

In so mixed-up a situation, the book page is an unknown quantity, no matter how good its intentions. Sometimes I have been driven to think of it as a survival only—a last gesture of decency that the modern newspaper is ready to make before it becomes all promotion, all advertising, all sensational entertainment. "Dramatic criticism" has about passed away in provincial newspapers. Instead there is a "movie page" consisting of blurbs written by Hollywood pimps—perhaps with the addition of a syndicated column or so. It is promotion merely. The advertisers—that is, the movie theaters—would allow nothing else. Perhaps book pages are destined to undergo the same transformation. After all, a newspaper publisher may argue, books are now a commercial product. Why should they be discussed any more critically than other commercial products: furniture, patent medicine, stocks and bonds, radio programs—all of which are advertised and promoted but never reviewed? A great many large newspapers have already taken exactly this view—see, for example, the "book pages" of certain dailies in Cleveland, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Louisville.

But perhaps the book page may survive long enough to catch the turn of the tide in another direction, when the country is at last surfeited with advertising and newspapers have to change their present policy.

As long as it does survive, it is one very important place where a last stand may be made against vulgarity and crass standardization. It may not serve to "sell" this or that book by a specific review. But it will encourage decent people to think that decency remains somewhere and can lift up its head, even in the columns of a Sunday newspaper. It should give such people a confidence in themselves and help them to be critical in a time when the main tendency is to conform to the shallow *mores* of big business. It may not reform taste by driving people dictatorially; but it may help taste to form itself.

In our time, however, when there is so much more emphasis on ideas than on art, and when art itself has a pronounced social bias and propagandist turn, the book page—especially the provincial book page—has a chance to assume to some degree the function that the editorial page has about dropped. Presumably the literary editor and his staff are reviewing books; but the books they review are so full of ideas that the reviewers often become editorialists in practice. More than likely, the newspaper owner will be quite indulgent toward such social philosophizing on the book page, which he does not take very seriously. During my seven years I recall only one instance in which a review was suppressed by the owner. That was a review of Stuart Chase's *Your Money's Worth*, which was cut out because it "might offend the national advertisers". I remember no instance in which I was scolded after the appearance of a review. But I published many a review that might have called for a scolding, if the owner had not been either too careless, or too indulgent, or too high-minded to notice—I do not know which!

Now that this particular book page is wiped out, one casualty among many casualties of the Great Depression, I could not argue with perfect and ultimate certainty that all the things I have speculated about are true. I can only say that they seem to be true, or might have been true, or certainly may still be true for any book page founded and administered by persons who are willing to take pains. Clearly, there are such persons, in the South and elsewhere, and I like to think that they may prevail. But as I look at their pages and see little invasions of crossword puzzles and underwear advertisements among the book reviews, I begin to wonder whether their days, too, are numbered.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS; JOURNALIST

by Granville Hicks

In the summer of 1887 a tall young man walked into the office of James Green, city editor of the Cincinnati *Times-Star*. His name, he said, was David Graham Phillips; he had just graduated from Princeton that June, and he wanted a job. Murat Halstead, editor of the *Commercial Gazette*, had sent him to Mr. Green; was there an opening? Green looked at the conspicuously patterned suit, the eighteen-inch trousers, the dangling cigarette, and shuddered. No, he answered, there was no vacancy.

Phillips shrugged his shoulders. He had no intention of returning to the sleepy streets of Madison, Indiana, where his father was the leading banker. Could he, he inquired, come to the office and glance at the exchanges? Green, who was young and, as Halstead had told Phillips, soft-hearted, could see no objection to that. Phillips thanked him and left. When Green came to the office at seven-thirty the next morning, he found the youth reading the papers, curtly wished him good morning, and paid no further attention to him. He was there the following day and the day after that and the day after that. Several weeks passed, in which Green's distaste deepened and found confirmation in the attitude of the rest of the staff. With growing impatience they waited for the more than fashionably dressed Princetonian to abandon his siege; quite calmly he appeared each morning at seven-thirty to study the state of journalism in the nation and the methods of the paper he proposed to serve.

He knew what he wanted. Though his twentieth birthday was some months away, he had chosen his career. His father, after sending him to the public schools of Madison, providing for him a tutor in languages, and turning him loose in the family's well-stocked library, had given him two years at De Pauw and two at Princeton; he had done his best for David, who would have to do the rest for himself. David had not hesitated long, but, accepting the invitation of a classmate, Marshall Halstead, had gone to Cincinnati. Marshall had not been able to convince his father of David's ability, and David seemed to be having as little success with the editor of the *Times-Star*, but he had no intention of giving up.

At last, and in what was to be his own best novelistic manner, his opportunity came. There was a morning when, after several important stories had broken and every reporter was busy, Green learned that a murder had taken place. Desperate, he told Phillips to get the facts and be back by twelve-thirty; he would write the account. A few minutes before twelve-thirty Phillips appeared with the whole story written up in the style the *Times-Star* affected. Green printed it as it was written, and took another look at the young man with wide trousers. Only a few more trials were needed to convince him that he had made a discovery;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Phillips was given a regular place on the staff, and soon he was the talk of Cincinnati. In less than a year Halstead brought Phillips to the *Commercial Gazette* by offering him twice the salary Green could pay. "Halstead told me", says Mr. Green, "that I had done remarkably well in training the young man. As a matter of fact he did not need any training; he was a born reporter."

Green was right. Though Phillips was later gratefully to acknowledge his debt to Green and the *Times-Star*, he had within himself journalistic attributes that only a little training was needed to develop. A newspaper man he was, and a newspaper man he remained until the day of his tragic death. However confused his appreciation of other values might be, he was never at a loss to recognize news value. And he knew how to write for an audience whose attention had to be caught in the first paragraph and held in every paragraph that followed. Princeton may have taught him to dress in a way that Cincinnati considered effeminate; it had not destroyed his aptitude for journalism.

On the *Commercial Gazette* he won the kind of eminence that was always his among newspaper men. Not so many years before Lafcadio Hearn had been a reporter on that paper, and his work was still pointed out for the younger men to admire and imitate. Phillips too had literary ambitions, and he not only sought to give his reports stylistic distinction but experimented with essays and short stories. As tireless a reader as ever, he did not neglect his opportunities to study at first hand the life of a provincial city. Not merely resourceful and alert in the pursuit of news but also indefatigable in his attempts to discover for himself the springs of human conduct, he talked with cab-drivers and policemen, bartenders and politicians, and remembered what they told him.

But his sister, Mrs. Carolyn Frevert, was constantly reminding him that New York was the place for a young man with literary ambitions, and in the summer of 1890 Phillips yielded to her advice. It meant, of course, beginning at the bottom again, but that chance he was willing to take. He was hired by the *Sun* at fifteen dollars a week and sent to report the Jefferson Market police court. But again his opportunity came with the dramatic suddenness of life in his own novels. A report reached the office of a child lost in the Catskills, and Daniel F. Kellogg, the city editor, sent Phillips to investigate. He wrote the kind of story that makes editors cheer and women weep, and was immediately put on space rates.

All sorts of assignments began to come his way, from routine reports of lectures to special accounts of tragic fires and mysterious murders. He was sent to Tennessee to report a coal strike, and, though his fellow journalists laughed at the elegance of his white flannels, they noted that he got the news. He began to do special stories for the Sunday issue, but his regular work continued to include such events as the birth of triplets in Cold Spring and the street parade of Barnum and Bailey's Circus. Indeed, he was more likely than not to receive apparently uninteresting assignments, for it was believed in the *Sun* office that he could see a story where no other reporter would believe one existed. When Joseph Choate, speaking at a banquet, casually remarked that "it would be a good thing for this country if all the Irishmen, instead of trying to control politics here, would go back to Ireland and govern their own sorely misgoverned land", none of the gentlemen of the press saw more than an ordinary speech worth half a column; but Phillips saw, and wrote, a feature story.

In the spring of 1893 he went to the *World*, which for nearly nine years he served as London correspondent, staff reporter, and editorial writer. In London he achieved one of the historic beats of the decade. In June, 1893, two British battleships, the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown*, collided off the coast

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Asia Minor. Only the most cursory reports had reached London; not even the Admiralty knew the details. Phillips cabled to the nearest telegraph office, but the operator was a Turk. The message fell, however, into the hands of a missionary, who sent Phillips an account of the disaster. This was printed in the *World* some time before naval officials in England were informed of what had happened.

Returning to America, Phillips did general reporting for the *World* until 1895, when he was assigned to feature writing. Again his literary talent was recognized. One Thanksgiving Day Charles Edward Russell sent him to the Montefiore Home for Incurables; again he wrote the kind of story that, despite journalistic anonymity, brings a man fame. Phillips's name became almost legendary. Wherever he went, journalists gathered about him. Though even his friends were amused at the height of his collars and the conspicuousness of his clothes, and though they laughingly told how his tailor had said he saved all his fancy waistcoat material to make suits for Mr. Phillips, they did not deny him the position of leadership he unconsciously assumed. Tall enough to stand out in any group, he attracted attention by the impressiveness of his manner and the severity of his expression. He affected sternness, perhaps because his handsome features were a little weak; but the resoluteness of purpose that his face suggested was undeniably genuine.

Joseph Pulitzer became interested in this bright young man, and in 1897 transferred him to the editorial department. Believing that he had the makings of an editor and hoping to instil in him the Pulitzerian conception of journalism, he attached him whenever possible to his personal entourage. In 1898 he gave Phillips charge of the editorial page on the day that W. H. Merrill was not in the office, and the next year he entrusted to him the supervision of the department during Merrill's vacation. Ability as an editor Phillips undoubtedly had, but he found it difficult to adapt himself to Pulitzer's policies. He continued, however, as a member of the editorial staff through the year 1901, occasionally reporting special events such as the death of President McKinley.

In time Pulitzer began to doubt if Phillips would ever develop the requisite qualities for what he regarded as the highest position on the paper. But Phillips also was nursing doubts, wondering how much longer he would care to remain in journalism. In 1901 he wrote some articles for magazines and succeeded in finishing a novel, *The Great God Success*, which he published under the pseudonym of John Graham. To Pulitzer, who believed his men should give themselves exclusively to the *World*, this was further ground for dissatisfaction; to Phillips it was cause for hope. Again his sister urged him to make the experiment, and George Horace Lorimer encouraged him by saying that the *Saturday Evening Post* would be glad to see his editorial articles and stories. Early in 1902 he resigned from the *World*. His first work as a free lance was a series of articles on journalism, a not particularly complimentary series, in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

The remaining ten years of his life Phillips devoted to writing. Because of his newspaper training he preferred to work at night, standing at a tall desk in his apartment at the National Arts Club. In a single night he would write six or seven thousand words of a rough draft that was later copied for revision. Working as he did at such a rate, it is little wonder that his productivity was enormous. At the time of his death in January, 1911, he had published seventeen novels, a play, and a book of non-fiction. He left in manuscript six novels, including *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise,* with its 964 pages. He had written nearly forty articles for the *Saturday Evening Post* and at least as many for other magazines, such as the *Cosmopolitan, Success* and the *Arena.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His death was as sensational as anything in his books. In the latter months of 1910 he received a series of threatening letters, charging that he had maligned certain persons in *The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig* and other books. To these letters Phillips, who, like most muckrakers, had been threatened many times, paid little attention. On January 23, 1911, as he was on his way to lunch at the Princeton Club, a young man suddenly rushed up, fired six shots at him, and then took his own life. Phillips died the next day. The assassin was a young musician named Fitzhugh G. Goldsborough, a maniac whose personal papers showed that he had been planning the murder for several months. His sole motive seems to have been the fancied grievance that the novelist had insulted his family. For two days Phillips's death was the sensation of the papers. The third day the front-page news was the disappearance of Dorothy Arnold.

Phillips had, not unnaturally and certainly not unwisely, written his first novel on the subject that he knew best, journalism. The hero of *The Great God Success* wins his spurs with a story of a lost child, and doubtless many of his other adventures as closely parallel Phillips's own. As is so often true of first novels, *The Great God Success* indicates the direction in which Phillips was to move. It is in the new mood of the new century, the mood that Crane and Norris had done much to establish and that *Sister Carrie* was about to define. Unconventional in its treatment of the relations between men and women, candid in its portrayal of ruthlessness and chicanery in high places, naturalistic in its descriptions of newspaper work and city life, it bears little resemblance to either the classics or the popular fiction of preceding decades. And in its concern with the conflict between liberalism and the desire for wealth in the individual and the conflict between democracy and plutocracy in the body politic, as well as in its concern with the relations between a man's domestic life and his financial success, it sounds the major themes not merely of Phillips's work but of a decade and a half of American literature.

But Phillips, not yet sure of himself, sought in his second novel to capitalize the already somewhat surfeited taste for Graustarkian romance. It is true that he balances the more picturesque elements in *Her Serene Highness* with sermons on and practical examples of the superiority of democratic Americans to the effete aristocrats of European countries, but the book is little more than a demonstration of his willingness to comply with the current demand, whatever its nature. Fortunately for him, that demand was already taking such form that his particular talents were not likely to be wasted. In *A Woman Ventures* he returned to journalism and in *The Golden Fleece* he aimed another blow at European aristocracy, but in *The Master Rogue* he established himself on the path that he was unhesitatingly, and most profitably, to follow.

The Master Rogue, a story of a great financier, appeared in 1903. In the autumn of 1902 *McClure's Magazine* had begun the publication of two series of articles, Ida Tarbell's on the Standard Oil Company and Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities*. With the appearance of these articles, a new force came into American life; the muckraking movement had begun. Their success taught McClure and half a dozen other editors that Americans were becoming interested in the corruption that ever since the Civil War had accompanied industrial expansion. Within two or three years each issue of any one of eight of ten magazines contained two or three articles exposing corruption in business and government. This movement of criticism and exposure set the tone of the decade, a tone that Phillips altogether relished.

Into the movement Phillips plunged, not merely as a novelist but also as an active and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

none too gentle wielder of the muck-rake. He wrote articles on the dishonesty of officials, the crimes of financiers, and the extravagances of plutocrats, some of which he collected in *The Reign of Gilt*. But his most famous contribution, and one of the more notorious products of the entire decade, was *The Treason of the Senate*, published in the March, 1906, issue of the *Cosmopolitan* and subsequent issues. Genuinely horrified by what his perhaps none too thorough researches revealed, Phillips laid on the lash with a courageous disregard of personal consequences and a somewhat less admirable indifference to scientific accuracy. "From the steady, pointing finger of public scorn and contempt . . . ," he wrote in his first article, "Depew is not secure anywhere but in the Senate itself—when the galleries are closed and only his colleagues are there." Of Lodge he remarked, "We have seen enough to identify beneath the robe of the 'gentleman scholar' the familiar coarse type of machine politician. . . . To expect him to originate or to endorse any measure of democratic justice would be like looking for potatoes among the roots of a dock weed". He summarized his opinion of the group he was attacking by saying, "A scurvy lot they are, are they not, with their smirking and cringing and voluble palaver about God and patriotism. . . . The Senate is licensing and protecting the sneak-thieves that pilfer daily, hourly, from your wages, your savings, your till, your larder, your coal bin". This series, it has been claimed, helped to bring about the direct election of Senators; certainly it provoked threats of assassination against Phillips, an attack by name in the Senate, and President Roosevelt's speech that coined the term muckraker and made it current.

But, whatever his talents for frontal attack, Phillips preferred fiction as a vehicle for muckraking. After *The Master Rogue* came *The Cost*, another novel of the financial world; and after *The Cost* came *The Plum Tree*. *The Cost* is centrally concerned with the effect of an early and secret marriage, but inasmuch as Olivia's husband is a peculiarly unscrupulous financier and the man she loves an incredibly honest politician, the telling of her story involves Phillips in direct accounts of business fraud and political intrigue. Even more vigorously *The Plum Tree* leads us into the muckraking arena with the story Harvey Sayler tells of the methods by which he became the secret agent of a group of industrialists and finally a maker of presidents. Scarborough, the honest politician of *The Cost*, is the foil in this story as well, the spokesman of the forces of righteousness and the proponent of Phillips's own remedies for the evils he attacks.

The year 1905 witnessed the publication not only of *The Plum Tree* but of two other novels as well—*The Social Secretary*, which tells of love and snobbery in Washington, and *The Deluge*, which describes snobbery and love in New York and the warfare of Wall Street Titans. It is also the year of *The Reign of Gilt*, a collection of muckraking articles. No novel shows more clearly than does *The Deluge* Phillips's talent for timeliness. In July, 1904, *Everybody's* had begun the serialization of Thomas Lawson's sensational *Frenzied Finance*, and the articles were still appearing when *The Deluge* left the press. Without too closely paralleling Lawson's career, Phillips by no means concealed the resemblance between that spectacular performance and the conduct of his Matt Blacklock. Not only did his description of the pious Roebuck and the aristocratic Langdon—both characters he had introduced in earlier novels—give him opportunity for heavy-handed comments upon "the so-called 'organizers of industry' who bear about the same relation to industry that the boll weevil bears to the cotton crop"; his interpretation of Blacklock's motives must have impressed the pertinence of his novel upon the thousands of readers of *Frenzied Finance*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After issuing but a single novel, *The Fortune Hunter*, in 1906, Phillips prepared himself for his farewell to muckraking. There is, of course, some muckraking in every book he wrote, but by 1907 he apparently judged that the market for the more slashing sort of fictional exposure was falling off. Making the best of the insurance scandals in *Light-Fingered Gentry*, he devoted his next novel to what he no doubt regarded as constructive criticism. *The Second Generation* is the story of Hiram Ranger, sturdy business man of the old school, diligent, honest, and democratic. His children, however, have been spoiled by education in the East and prolonged association with America's pseudo-aristocracy. Learning that he is fatally ill, Ranger resolves upon a desperate experiment and bestows his fortunes upon a local college. Immediately his son and daughter are jilted by the daughter and son of the Whitneys, another wealthy family of the same city. Arthur Ranger, quickly coming to his senses, goes to work in the factory his father had established, achieves financial success, and transforms the plant into a workers' paradise. Adelaide's progress is slower, but in the end she achieves sanity and becomes of great assistance to her husband in the educational enterprise in which he is engaged. The wealthy Whitney children, on the other hand, go rapidly and completely to the dogs.

The underlying theories of this novel are a fairly accurate measure of the profundity of Phillips's thinking on social problems. In the second part of *The Reign of Gilt* he had stated that the masses of the country's population were sound, that business was essentially honest, and that popular education was establishing a firm basis for national progress. Despite his obvious and detailed familiarity with the complexities of contemporary industrialism in all but especially in its political aspects, he was capable of attributing the evils he saw to the personal wickedness of a few individuals and of believing that the inculcation of honesty was the all-sufficient remedy for the country's ills. Though he could concretely describe the morals and methods of a Harvey Sayler, he saw no reason why an honest and altruistic Scarborough should not turn the rascals out. Fully aware of the methods by which the power of a Dumont or a Roebuck was won, he maintained that intelligent honesty "is the one competition in which a crook cannot survive", and found no obstacles to the success of a conscientious and public-spirited Arthur Ranger.

Of Phillips's sincerity and the genuineness of his crusading spirit there can be little question; equally evident are the superficiality of his diagnoses and the vagueness of his remedies. To the end of his life his thinking was incurably muddled. From his father, a Republican whose views had been formed in the atmosphere of idealism prevalent in the early days of the party, he had acquired a belief in plain living and high thinking, the rights and capacities of the common man, and the inevitability of democratic government. His journalistic experience led, on the other hand, to a confused Nietzscheanism. Not only did he make no attempt to reconcile these two sets of ideas; he seems to have been unaware of any conflict between them. Following whichever theory suited the moment's needs, he was predominantly the old-school Republican in his nonfiction and most of his muckraking novels, and the Nietzschean in his later work. But both attitudes are to be found in all his books, nor is it unusual to discover him on a single page employing the idea of the superman to defend one kind of ruthlessness and using his democratic theories as a stick with which to belabor a different kind. He was a fighter and hence he had to have a cause, but the cause interested him so much less than the fight that his vagueness with respect to the former is not surprising.

In his discovery of a new cause Phillips neatly anticipated, by a year or two, the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sudden shift of the popular magazines from articles and stories of exposure to a more or less frank exploitation of sex themes. He boldly began his campaign with a not too memorable play called *The Worth of a Woman*, produced at the Madison Square Theatre in February, 1908. Rather more interesting than this drama of a woman who refuses to make pregnancy an excuse for marrying a man who does not love her—though he does, of course, realize his love just before the final curtain—is the note with which Phillips prefaced the printed version. "There are", he wrote, "three ways of dealing with the sex relations of men and women—two wrong and one right. For lack of more accurate names the two wrong ways may be called respectively the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental. . . . The wishy-washy literature and the wishy-washy morality on which it is based are not one stage more—or less—rotten than the libertine literature and the libertine morality on which it is based. . . . They are twin sisters of the same horrid mother. . . . There is the third and right way of dealing with the sex relations of men and women. That is the way of simple candor and naturalness. Treat the sex question as you would any other question. Don't treat it reverently; don't treat it rakishly. Treat it naturally."

And so he set his jaw and went to work. *Old Wives for New*, with which he closely followed the play, defines his approach rather more exactly than the preface. Based on the familiar thesis that when women lose their beauty they lose their husbands, it shows Phillips writing with rather more frankness than at that time was fashionable and with the same sort of circumstantial definiteness one finds in his muckraking books; but it exhibits very little of that insight into women that Frank Harris has attributed to Phillips, and it suggests that his views on sexual problems were no clearer than his views on the economic order. In so far as it was novel to point out that women should be treated as human beings, that they are often aggressors in love, and that they have a preference for strong men, Phillips was blazing a new trail, but it can scarcely be maintained that he pursued his pioneering for any great distance.

The other novels that Phillips lived to see published treat the new theme. In *The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig* he blended politics and love, relying chiefly on the latter ingredient. *White Magic* and *The Hungry Heart* are romances in which a lighter manner, clumsy though it actually is, seems skilful in comparison with the more customary blunderbuss methods. *The Husband's Story*, however, which returns to the sledge-hammer technique, is much the best of the group. Godfrey Loring, frequently interrupting himself to preach at the reader, tells the story of his career in business and his wife's career in society. It is an attack upon a certain type of ambitious woman, as thorough, as detailed, and as bitter as any Phillips ever directed against a corrupt politician or an unscrupulous financier. Compared with it, Robert Herrick's elaborations of a similar thesis are little less than complimentary to American womanhood. Yet it is the violence of feeling attributed to Loring that gives him a degree of vitality and even lends to the silly woman who is the object of his disgust the appearance of reality.

Of the posthumous novels four are in the same vein; the other two, *George Helm* and *The Conflict* were probably written earlier. *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise* is of course the best known of the four, but *The Price She Paid* has some interest because of its resemblance to the more famous book. Like *Susan Lenox* it is the story of a woman's struggle for independence, but its heroine is handicapped by early exposure to the customs of the idle rich and the ideology of the socially ambitious. Constantly betrayed by this training in her effort to become a singer, she finally rises above her weaknesses and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

achieves the spiritual independence that results in professional success.

Just as he classified politicians as either corrupt or honest, so Phillips classified women as either parasitical or independent. And he intended *Susan Lenox* to be the epic of a woman's struggle for independence. All his knowledge of American and European life he poured into this book, which moves from a small Indiana town to a Mississippi showboat, thence to Cincinnati tenements and factories, to New York theatres and cheap boarding-houses, to Paris, and back to New York. More courageous as well as more desperate than Mildred Gower in *The Price She Paid*, Susan more than once becomes a courtesan. Like Mildred, though after sinking to a lower level and experiencing greater hardships, she learns self-discipline and wins her independence. In an exquisitely sentimental passage at the end of the book, Phillips describes her appearance after her victory—her look of one who has suffered but stood fast, the "consummate fascination" of her "sensitive, strong yet gentle" mouth, the slightly tragic expression such as one always sees on the face of "any of the sons and daughters of men who is blessed—and cursed—with imagination".

Phillips intended *Susan Lenox*, on which he worked during most of his writing career and which he had just finished when he died, to be his masterpiece. Certainly, if he is to be remembered by only one book, it is well that this is the one. It is not merely his most serious effort; it is a completely representative work. Everything is here: the familiar theme of woman's place in the world, long muckraking episodes about factory and tenement conditions in Cincinnati and political corruption in New York, journalistically sensational episodes involving sudden death, sermons on the virtues of democracy and sermons on the creed of the superman. And through all its pages surge the twin impulses, the eagerness of the newspaper man to make a scoop and the zeal of the crusader to banish evil. To say that *Susan Lenox* is Phillips at his best is true, but it is not enough; the book is the whole of Phillips, the perfect product of all his talents and all his faults, apparently his only but his all-sufficient monument.

It would be difficult, despite the interest Arnold Bennett once expressed in his books and the enthusiasm with which Frank Harris calls him the greatest of American novelists, to maintain that Phillips is entitled to a higher place than the literary historians have given him. Most critics have dismissed him as a journalist, and the epithet, though perhaps there is more to be said for him *qua* journalist than has been said, is perfectly just. His subjects are as timely as front-page headlines; he bids for attention as boldly as a feature writer; his descriptions are as crisp and as superficial as a news report and his reflective comments as shallow as an editorial.

If a novelist cannot fashion plausible, self-consistent, well-rounded characters, it will scarcely matter what else he can do. Phillips, in his very first novel, clearly announced his failure in this respect by repeatedly pausing to explain his hero's motives. This habit he never outgrew, nor did he overcome the weakness it betrayed. At no point in his career, from *The Great God Success* to *Susan Lenox*, had he confidence enough in his characters to let them stand alone. When, by putting his story in the mouth of one of the actors, he chose a method that forced him to forego his commentaries, his deficiencies were baldly revealed. Matt Blacklock in *The Deluge* is, at least in the broader outlines of his character, self-consistent; but Godfrey Loring in *The Husband's Story* and Harvey Sayler in *The Plum Tree* shift as wantonly and bewilderingly as persons in a nightmare. Apparently it never occurred to Phillips that, however Sayler's ideas may have changed in the course of his life, he would necessarily have adopted a single

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point of view in writing his story. Instead, Sayler is allowed to speak on one page as if he were proud of his practices and on another as if he regarded them with Phillips's indignation; sometimes he is a boastful crook, sometimes a penitent crook, and sometimes in his own eyes no crook at all. Like the good journalist he was, Phillips wanted to put Sayler through his paces, using him to expose the ramifications of political corruption; like the crusader he was, he wanted to condemn the evils he exhibited; hence Sayler is whatever at the moment it suited Phillips's purpose for him to be.

Never was Phillips willing to let the logic of character shape a story; it is character that is moulded to meet other demands. Conversions such as those of Mildred Gower and Jane Hastings have no cause; sufferings such as those of Susan Lenox have no effect. Often it is eagerness to point a moral that dictates the treatment of character, but sometimes it is merely the desire for a happy ending. Harvey Sayler wins, for no good reason, the woman who has for years spurned him because of practices he never repudiates; Matt Blacklock's marital happiness requires a special miracle for him and another for his wife; Jack Dumont conveniently dies so that his long-suffering wife can marry Scarborough; the heroes of *Old Wives for New* and *The Husband's Story* secure the women they really love by virtue of strange coincidences as well as by recourse to divorce; even the stupid young fortune hunter in *The Golden Fleece* is provided, after his failure to get a rich wife, with a fortune that permits him to marry the English girl he had, so Phillips tells us, always loved.

After witnessing such performances, designed merely to gratify the sentimental reader, we cannot be surprised to discover Phillips manipulating his plots to prove his theses. The political triumphs of those paragons of virtue, Scarborough and Helm, are as patently made to order as the defeats of Roebuck, Dumont, Langdon, and other malefactors of great wealth. The way the rise of the Rangers is balanced by the fall of the Whitneys gives *The Second Generation* the appearance of a mathematical demonstration rather than that of a product of insight and imagination. Victor Dorn's political and personal successes in *The Conflict* have little relation to the kind of world that we happen to live in.

And Phillips could be as rankly emotional and as cheaply melodramatic as Robert W. Chambers or any other manufacturer of salable commodities. When Lorry is shot in *The Second Generation*, Phillips writes, "Lorry stood straight as a young sycamore for an instant, turned toward Estelle. 'Goodbye—my love!' he said softly, and fell, face downward, with his hands clasping the edge of her dress". There are long passages, indeed, on precisely this level, that make the reading of his books a not altogether painless proceeding. They suggest that nothing but his zeal for reform distinguishes Phillips from the purveyors of circulating library delicacies of his own day and ours.

Nothing but his zeal for reform and the excellence of his journalism. For Phillips was a good journalist. In *The Great God Success* the description of the mechanics of newspaper making is as impressive as the delineation of character is shoddy. *The Cost* and *The Deluge* describe in the most satisfying detail the operations by which fortunes are made and lost. *The Plum Tree* and *George Helm* omit none of the steps in the creation of political power. *Susan Lenox* is perfectly concrete, whether the heroine is playing on a showboat, working in a factory, walking the streets, or associating with gangsters. Phillips could describe the life of his times with the vigor and explicitness of a star reporter, and that is no mean gift. How many of our novelists from Howells on have fallen down at precisely this point! Phillips's contemporary, Robert Herrick, far more skilful as a novelist, failed again and again to achieve the solidity that his kind of fiction

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demands. If Phillips had written *The Memoirs of an American Citizen*, he would have ignored or misunderstood Van Harrington's spiritual decline, which Herrick so subtly analyzes, but he would have described Harrington's material rise so circumstantially that there could be no room for the scepticism Herrick's treatment arouses.

Phillips, like Dreiser and Upton Sinclair, gave us documented fiction. The documentation is not in itself particularly important, for it can only give his books a certain historical value. But the ability to document is evidence of familiarity with some of the complexities of American life, and without such familiarity American novelists, at least in so far as they deal with American subjects, are handicapped almost to the point of helplessness. At least a good journalist like Phillips shows what some of the material is and what its possibilities may be. So long as formal skill is divorced from intimate knowledge of American life, as it is today and for many decades has been, it will be necessary for critics to pay as much attention to those authors who have the knowledge but lack the skill as they pay to those who have the skill but lack the knowledge. Though Phillips's work seems crude when compared with the work of more polished novelists, and though admittedly it is upon a vastly lower level, it nevertheless, by indicating the tasks they have chosen to ignore, suggests a further comparison in which the stylists and technicians, the devotees of form and worshippers of the letter, do not fare so well. No one would maintain that such gifts as he had are enough to make a novelist, but they are gifts that would enrich a goodly number of our writers today.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE EVERGREEN TREE OF DIABOLICAL KNOWLEDGE

by Esther McGill

"Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year! And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last."

IT HAS been often remarked that we are all reading too much. The critics blame cheap editions, anthologies, the book clubs, and the libraries. It is this which is ruining modern taste. There are too many magazines, they tell us, too many novels. Aldous Huxley goes farther and condemns the reading habit as a new vice—"our universal opiate". But this "spiritual drug" is not a peculiar or distinctive feature of modern times. It has been in the world too long and has put too many generations to sleep to account for the mental stagnation of the present. More than two hundred years ago the modern craze for reading had its beginning, and its origin is linked in the most interesting and particular way with the development of the commercial circulating library.

As long ago as the middle of the seventeenth century, indeed, the "unhappy passion for desultory reading", as the old critics used to phrase it, really began. Then leisurely ladies read endless popular French romances "done in English". The more vivid passages in the lives of Cassandra and Cleopatra became common talk, and more than one child of a romance-reading mother had to go through life bearing the name of Orondates or Statira. But even though these romances had a wider circulation than other forms of literature, they still reached only an aristocracy of readers.

In the early years of the eighteenth century the first circulating libraries were opened, and it was then that the reading habit came to be established among ordinary people. We think of the novels of Fielding, Richardson, Sterne and Smollet as supplying the reading public, but they certainly did not do it alone. Even a casual review of the papers and periodicals of this time discovers the names of hundreds of novels which are now long forgotten, and most of which are unknown even to students of literature. Yet these forgotten volumes were awaited with great eagerness by people of all sorts, and in their own day they had enough life in them to warm the hearts of sages and fools, men of quality and humble servants, and to set both the Duchess of Devonshire and her maid in the greatest flutter. The Duchess would retire to her dressing room to read in furtive privacy the last few chapters of the latest thriller. For the Duchess could not wait and neither, had she known it, could her maid. She, too, crept off for a breathless hour of secret reading. Indeed, each had to read in private, for neither would have allowed to the other what she enjoyed too much herself. This is easy enough to understand, but what does surprise us is to learn that such men as Burke, Fox and Johnson, Sir Walter

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Scott and Coleridge, confess a weakness for the same sort of stories as those which excited the pretty giddy Sophias and the doting dreaming servant maids. We have never heard of the novels of Mrs. Bennett, but one of them sold two thousand copies in advance of publication, and all of them had several editions, and were translated into French and German; and a generation later Coleridge was praising them in extravagant terms. We are bound to conclude that the world of novels which arose in the eighteenth century had at least the power of peculiar timeliness and charming pertinence. Certainly they flourished and multiplied as no literature in all the history of England had before, and they left their mark on the tone of all fiction for generations to come.

All the great eighteenth-century novels were written between 1740 and 1770. At the same time more than six hundred others were published in and around London—a very impressive number when we think of the printing methods and the fact that novels, as we know them, were new. The ball, once started, rolled ever faster, so that in the next thirty years—from 1770 to the end of the century—this number increased nearly three-fold. We cannot lay this great novelistic activity to a sudden outburst of creative genius, nor altogether to the example set by the major novels. Perhaps more important than either of these causes was the establishment of commercial circulating libraries, which first appeared early in the century, and which we have never ceased patronizing since. Though circulating libraries have never been taken very seriously, and never considered a cause of the enormous increase of novels published and read in the eighteenth century, actually it is hard to overrate their importance. For they provided a public which, except for them, would not have been reached at all, or reached only very slowly.

For one thing, the price of books was prohibitive to the lower classes, and even the middle classes were unable to buy them in anything like the numbers they desired. The average cost of a volume of fiction, in the middle of the eighteenth century was 2s 6d., which means that a novel cost at least five shillings, and might cost twenty or more. A novel was rarely less than two volumes long, and was more often six or eight. Now the wages of a Pamela amounted at most to four pounds a year, which means that Pamela, before her elevation, would have spent two months' salary in buying a single novel. But novels could be rented by the impecunious for threepence a day at the libraries, and even happier arrangements could be made by quarterly or yearly subscription. About 1760 the customary charge was three shillings a quarter, or 10/6 a year. A few years later, when the libraries began multiplying very rapidly, library-keepers organized, and the subscription price rose, and by the end of the century the London libraries were generally charging a guinea a year, twelve shillings half-yearly, and 7/6 quarterly. But even at this rate, novels could be put into the hands of people who could never have afforded them otherwise. There is plenty of evidence that writers were aware of this. It will be remembered, for example, that one of the chief worries of the anti-Jacobins was that Tom Paine's dangerous works were printed in editions cheap enough to enable the lower classes to buy them. When George Walker wrote *The Vagabond*, a novel bitterly attacking Paine and Godwin, he was urged to print a cheap edition of it. This, he replied, was unnecessary, because, "Through the medium of the Circulating Libraries, any man may read the work for much less than though it were printed on paper like the *Rights of Man*".

Very little is known about the circulating libraries, but what we can learn points clearly to their enormous influence in turning England into a land of novel-readers and novel-writers. If Fielding and Richardson established the taste for reading novels, the circulating libraries fixed the habit.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Just where the idea originated, or who thought of it, we do not certainly know. There is a story that Allan Ramsay kept a few books in his wig shop in Edinburgh, and, wearying of having his friends and customers walk off with his books, to return them when they chose, commenced charging threepence a day for their use. That was about 1725. It is also told that booksellers devised it as a means for making stall-reading pay. As early as 1728, in Bristol, one Thomas Sendall, a bookseller, established a circulating library. In Farley's newspaper for March 30th of that year he announces that he has begun "a method of furnishing curious lovers of reading with a great variety of books to be read by the year at a very easy rate".

The middle of the eighteenth century found commercial circulating libraries fairly established throughout England—and by the close of the century the number of libraries and the number of novels (their chief wares) and the number of novel readers had increased tremendously. There is no doubt that *Pamela*, and *Tom Jones*, and the other great eighteenth-century novels, enlarged the ranks of readers, but without the aid of circulating libraries even they would not have found their way about as they did.

Pamela was published in 1740. Libraries were already established in many parts of the kingdom, and the novel was certainly read by many people who could not pay twelve shillings for the purchase of the volumes, but who could pay threepence apiece for the rental of them. Within the next thirty years came *Clarissa, Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, Peregrine Pickle, Roderick Random, Tristram Shandy, Humphrey Clinker*—the whole roll of great eighteenth century fiction. There was a ready market for these novels which the seventeenth century had not enjoyed, and *Pamela* swept England, finding its way alike to the top of the front stairs and the bottom of the back, with an ease that would not have been possible save for the circulating libraries. By the time the last of them was published, libraries were a familiar institution. London had a dozen or so: the Noble brothers had one in King Street and another in Leicester Square; Thomas Lowndes had been long established in Fleet Street; T. Vernor, Thomas Jones, and William Cooke operated libraries, and John Bell was rapidly expanding his "British Library" which had been one of the earliest, if not the very first, to be established in London, and which, oddly enough, is still in existence.

But, if 1770 marks the end of the *great* period of eighteenth-century novel writing, it by no means marks the end of the eighteenth-century novel. Until the close of the century and the coming of Jane Austen there is, so far as the historians of fiction are concerned, a barren and desolate tract. But it is during these waste years that the passion for novel reading, born early in the century, and showing today no signs of coming dissolution, was nourished and fed and brought to a remarkable flowering.

I have said that about six hundred novels appeared in the thirty years ending in 1770. More than fourteen hundred novels—varying from two to ten volumes each—were published in London between 1770 and 1800. Everyone in England "commenced author"—widows, whose estates were tied up by the machinations of lawyers, sons whose "only surviving parent" looked hopefully to them for support, young women too retiring and too modest to do anything else, reformed libertines, anti-Jacobins — everyone took up the pen and wrote.

The intimate connection between this wholesale production of novels and the establishment of circulating libraries may most easily be seen through the story of William Lane. Almost all booksellers—that is, book publishers—kept circulating libraries, having discovered, perhaps, that people could sometimes be persuaded to borrow what they could not be induced to buy. But of them all, William Lane was the most enterprising

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—the large-scale producer and distributor of fiction, and a man of whom any industrial age might be proud. In approved twentieth-century fashion Lane went about creating a market, and then took to supplying it. His first offering to the novel readers was *The Indian Adventurer, or the History of Mr. Vaneck,* published in 1780. Fifteen years later this gentleman was publishing more novels each year than all other publishers in London combined. And this was no small feat—the London of 1795 harbored no less than twenty-five booksellers, all of whom occasionally, at least, published novels, and most of whom published little else. Although he was associated with the work of many authors who achieved wide contemporary popularity, he is unknown to historians of fiction and his story is never told in the histories of book publishing.

It is difficult, indeed, to learn anything about this energetic business man. We do know, however, that he spent a number of years travelling about England organizing libraries. The only chronicler of these matters who seems to have thought him important enough to mention tells us that he established them in almost every town and village in the country. How this alone must have enlarged the reading public is obvious. Having organized the libraries—having, that is, given the public this easy opportunity to become a reading public—he went back to London and opened a publishing house in Leadenhall Street. And for the next twenty years there issued from Leadenhall Street the scores of novels which had a market ready-made for them. There is no doubt that many novels published during the last part of the century had no private sale to speak of. An edition commonly numbered five hundred copies, and a whole edition could easily be consumed by the libraries alone. Certainly Lane, and quite as certainly other booksellers, published primarily for circulating libraries. Lane frequently announced in the advertising pages of the novels he published that he had on hand "several thousand volumes suitable for circulating libraries in town or country", and he continued to offer his advice and aid to anyone who wished to go into the business. He did not himself, at first, keep a library, but he later established one. It was at this library that Leigh Hunt, according to his own account, became such a "glutton of novels" that he read "their three-volume enormities without skipping a syllable".

How much William Lane alone did to stimulate reading, particularly novel reading, can be judged by even the meagre account we have of his activities; and when we fill that in with the many other things that we can learn about the libraries, and about the enormous amount of controversy they raised, it is impossible to deny them an important place in the history of fiction. It should not be supposed that "idle reading females" alone patronized them. In Bath and other resorts and watering places people gathered in the circulating libraries as they had earlier gathered in coffee houses for conversation. Coleridge tells how, in his youth, he patronized a circulating library in King Street, Cheapside. "Here", he says, "I read through the catalogue, folios and all, whether I understood them, or did not understand them, running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes I was entitled to have daily". Everybody used them, and at the same time almost everybody deplored their existence. The thousand and more libraries which were scattered throughout England in the latter years of the century were not all, of course, large establishments. They range in size from the nine thousand or more volumes in Bell's British Library in London, down to the few shelves of some of the country circulating libraries. The advertisements in contemporary newspapers (one of the few sources of information about libraries), give some picture of them. Mr. Bowles of Weymouth advertised in the London *Sun* the sale of "Books, Musical Instruments, Cutlery, Jewellery, Stationery, and other Stock in Trade of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the well frequented Circulating Library". Very few normal human wants were left unsatisfied by Love's Circulating Library, or Pantheon of Taste and Fashion:

All the News, all the Conversation, and every thing worthy of Observation is there. In addition to 130 Periodical papers, furnished in the course of every week throughout the year, will be immediately added the Sun, Edinburgh Journal, Dublin Evening Post, London Gazette, and Racing Calendar.

These additions Mr. Love offers as a Tribute of Gratitude for the liberal support he is honored with.

Fine Teas, Coffee, Perfumery, etc., on the most reasonable terms.

A list of Arrivals, and the Only Correct Register of Lodging Houses can be seen at this Library.

The claims of publicity departments of publishing houses or book clubs in these advertising days of ours can scarcely go beyond the claims of Mr. Dutton, who kept a library in London:

To meet this general passion (the growing interest in reading) in the most liberal manner possible, the present edition of Dutton's Catalogue will evince that he has spared neither labour nor expense. In every department of science, professional information, elegant literature, light, amusing, desultory composition, his collection, he flatters himself, will be found as novel as the case admits, and both pertinent and select. . . . His library is therefore a repository of whatever is most valuable and useful in the productions of genius, the circle of experience, or accumulated wisdom of ages; contains a fund of erudition and knowledge of all that charms and interests in the exertions of nations and individuals, in the vicissitudes and intercourse of life, in the miracles of nature, and wonders of art, and affords the amplest and best authenticated intelligence and illustration of the numerous policies and religions which have successively flourished in the world, of manners, customs, laws, and languages.

This, then, was the function of the library as the library-keeper saw it. The critics and the moralists—even the novelists, and to some degree the novel readers—took another view of the matter. It is only recently that the word "novel" has ceased to be at least a little unsavory—a great many people still feel a little more apologetic than they like to admit about reading them.

It very early became the fashion to subscribe to the circulating libraries, and to read the books to be found there; but with the growth in numbers came a decline in reputation both of the libraries and of fiction, and here began that apologetic attitude toward novel reading to which we still cling a little. Sheridan's Lydia Languish, in danger of being caught at it, thrust *The Innocent Adultery* into the *Whole Duty of Man*, hid *Roderick Random* in the clothes closet, and opened Fordyce's *Sermons* and Mrs. Chapone's *Letters*. The libraries early came to be judged a very evil influence; they encouraged the promiscuous reading of fiction, and what could be worse than that? Ladies and gentlemen could read novels, perhaps, and not be contaminated, but when the circulating libraries made novels so readily accessible to the lower classes, giving them delusions of grandeur, and picturing for them scenes in a romantic world which did not exist for them, it was time to do something about it. Critics attacked novels—the bitter language of the reviewers would mortally offend the ears of any child of sensibility. In 1760 George Colman, then associated with David Garrick, wrote *Polly Honeycomb*, a short play depicting the pitfalls into which a young girl, her head turned by the circulating-library novels, might be drawn. Polly, made ambitious by her reading, wants to marry a romantic young gentleman of her own choosing, instead of a clerk of her father's choice—only to find just in time that the gentleman is an impostor and a fraud. "A man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent Garden," her harassed father cried, "as to permit her a circulating library education."

"Beelzebub", always on the search for souls

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to damn, wrote to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, "I approve of the great increase in circulating libraries over the kingdom. An indiscriminate reader at these seminaries of knowledge, I could not wish to see in a more hopeful train".

Not only did the critic and the moralist attack the libraries and the novels they contained, but novelists themselves, as if to forestall the charges of others, lined themselves up with the promoters of virtue. The author of *The Interesting Story of Edwin and Julia* deplores the influence of this new social evil. Young women will read, and, "the imagination heated and the passions excited in that most pernicious of all schools, the circulating library, the man of gallantry makes an easy conquest". But *he*, he goes on to add, is writing primarily, if not altogether, to point the way to righteousness and to overcome this unhappy circumstance.

A few instances like those above cannot begin to convey the attacks on the libraries as agencies of evil. The result was that the novelists were forced to assume the appearance, at least, of a tremendous moral responsibility, and it soon became the practice for them to defend their trade by insisting that they were writing in order to place on the library shelves novels which, by their high moral tone, would save readers who had been so long endangered. Clara Reeve, herself a novelist, and strong in support of the righteous, tells their story in *The Progress of Romance*, written in 1785:

> At this time (1766-69), when a constant supply of Novels was expected by the readers of the Circulating Library, some persons whose excellent principles led them to see and lament the decline of virtuous manners, and the passion for desultory reading, endeavoured to stem the torrent by making entertaining stories their vehicle to convey to the young and flexible heart, wholesome truths, that it refused to receive under the form of moral precepts and instructions; thus they tempered the *utile* with the *dulce*, and under the guise of Novels, gave examples of virtue rewarded, and vice punished; and if the young mind unawares to itself, was warmed with the love of virtue, or shocked at the punishment of the wicked; this was all the reward they wished or expected from their Labours.

The double burden thus laid upon the novel has been borne throughout the years, and has only recently been lightened. To be sure the two-fold responsibility of literature—to instruct and to entertain—is old enough. Drama and, to some degree, poetry, have been required to meet it. But, with the possible exception of the miracle plays and the moralities, no drama has ever primarily sought, as this fiction claimed to do, to instruct, nor has any drama been forced to excuse itself for entertaining people on the ground that it intended to enlighten them.

The circulating libraries were generally held responsible, by critics of fiction, for the widespread reading of novels, a claim certainly justified. They were next held responsible for lowering the standard of manners and morals by putting into the hands of a susceptible world tales that made vice attractive and virtue dull. Whereupon those high-minded writers who wanted to save the nation from moral dissolution went into the enemy's camp and used his own weapons. They wrote novels to be circulated through these same libraries, which pointed out that virtue must triumph and vice must be destroyed; that the system of rewards and punishments was inflexible and always just. Soon all novelists, whether they meant it or not, avowed this to be their purpose. They all wrote, it would seem, to overcome the evil effects of circulating library novels. The libraries can thus be held answerable alike for the existence of so many novels, for the widespread concern about their influence on the morals of the age, and for the attempt to overcome this danger by turning the novel into a moral document—a burden from which it has been released only after the passage of more than a hundred and fifty years.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PAUL BOURGET AND REALITY

by George N. Shuster

THE cultivation of art for its own sake appears to be usually a business in which extremes meet. French esthetes of the nineties may, for instance, have brewed a kind of narcotic for dulling the pangs of existence, but they were none the less confirmed naturalists who derived their best effects from a painstaking study of reality. Indeed they were probably realists first of all, and their art an affair of genre painting rather than of visions. You can discern this easily enough in the work of Henry James, who made the note-book indispensable to the novelist and yet sought constantly to "muffle the ache of the actual". I have often thought that the best explanation of this duality in James and the men he liked to name himself with might be that they were fundamentally more critical than imaginative. Certainly the dismay which James still arouses in his countrymen is attributable primarily to his discovery of the fallacy underlying America's conviction that it was a "young nation". He saw that citizens of the United States were descendants of an old culture (and not in the least gloriously savage infants or romping paleolithic democrats) constrained in his time to derive their intellectual substance from a rather thin soil. It was a necessary though disconcerting fragment of research.

This matter is of some general importance because, underneath the relentless comparisons between romantic rapture and cold fact which esthetic realism has everywhere implied, there lies a genuine passion for reality. But in the nineties the obvious difficulty was that this reality could, ultimately, be nothing other than human—a composite of ideas, habits, systems accumulated by a studious past. How James suffered by reason of this truth is evident from the circumstance that, for all his eagerness, he could never live himself into the European background. This was a frame, a *cadre*, which in a measure one had to acquire just as one came by a complexion or a sequence of grandfathers. The Europeans suffered from it too, but in a different way. Children born about 1870 had behind them at least a century of belligerent dissatisfaction with the *cadre*. Revolutions had been staged to smash it up. Books had been written to argue it into smithereens. But in the end one found that the thing was there all the time, though human beings had wandered out of it onto various moors of chaos. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to reconstruct it all somehow, by means of ceaseless studious comparisons in which artistic sensibility exercised the function of yearning.

No man's career illustrated the situation and what it involved so well as does that of Paul Bourget. Born in 1852 and educated in conformity with good middle-class standards, he earned the privilege of following a literary career at no slight personal cost. At the very outset, however, failure indicated the extent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to which he would become representative. For all their grace and emotional riches, Bourget's poems are decidedly without wings. And almost immediately the young writer had turned in an entirely new direction, and proved that an era was dawning with *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*. It is difficult to convey to the uninitiated how much savor and perceptiveness there is in these books even now; and of course they have filtered through so much subsequent writing that they possess for us not a whit of the freshness which breathed from them in 1883. Here are papers on men even yet unshaken from their pedestals—Baudelaire, Taine, Stendhal, Alexander Dumas. But though they would have suffered from duller subject-matter, it is certain that their importance lay far more in what they were than in what they happened to be about.

The *Essais* proposed both a new reality and a new method for attaining it. First of all, consciousness of the French (and so European) *cadre*, in the sense defined, was evident in the recognition of that "refinement" to which the modern man was doomed. Belonging to an old race and society, one simply could not possess a barbarian ruddiness of sensibility and taste. Enjoyment necessarily began at an hour comparatively late in the history of mankind, when the awkwardness of primitive emotion would come only to the super-exquisite, and when taking thought had grown to be quite as natural as taking breath. Both this emotion and this thought were inevitably concerned, too, with collective events—the national humiliation of 1870, the ghastly inquest of the Revolution, and the decline of religious conviction. Consciousness of such matters, Bourget held, is consciousness of reality, of that especial sort which is gained in analysis. A mind directed freely to objective things would not analyze; a mind turned inward, morbidly, could analyze only itself. But the study he proposed was really a study of man, and he began with absolute honesty. Indeed, whatever one may think today of the value of what Bourget has presented, the efficacy of his integrity abides.

The point of view adopted in the *Essais* was that of psychology, defined ultimately as the "study which has the same relation to ethics as anatomy has to therapeutic". More immediately the purpose was seen as an attempt "to define some of the exemplars of sentiments which certain writers of the time propose for the imitation of young people, and to indicate by hypothesis several of the general causes which impelled these writers to portray such sentiments". The list, from Baudelaire to Renan, is excellently chosen. In each case the object is hardly to pass judgment on the literary work itself, but rather to "analyze" it in order to discern "the countenance of the age". As a result, the treatment generally appears eminently detached. One sees almost immediately, however, that Bourget is not simply holding the mirror up to one kind of nature. To a careful reader the process of his sympathies and responses will be relatively easy to follow; and of course one gradually becomes aware of how deftly he has isolated just those aspects of the literature under consideration which best answer his own needs.

From the *Essais* through the whole lengthy list of Bourget's novels and critical writings there is really no definite break, but naturally some development (even, occasionally, evolution "by jumps" similar to that of which scientists speak) and enrichment. It is, therefore, utterly incorrect to speak of Bourget's "conversion", although after a certain period his devotion to religious points of view becomes much more intense. Thus the first novels, of which *Mensonges* is probably the best, are simple "psychological studies" of passion and punishment. The narrative is based upon the fact that one follows the other, but there is no attempt to point out a remedy or stress a teaching. Diagnosis alone is involved. When *Le Disciple* appeared in 1889, Bourget announced (in a preface that was meant to be a clear call to arms) his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conviction that no author could avoid being profoundly stirred by the responsibility assumed in trying to influence the minds and characters of young people through books. This novel was, as a matter of fact, a demonstration of this responsibility. Nevertheless, as we shall observe later on, Bourget had been conscious of the point from the very beginning.

Everything he wrote after this merely follows the trend outlined, with a marked difference. Many of the later books involve a "demonstration" of some "thesis" found to be the moral verity latent in the drama described. Thus *l'Etape,* written ten years after *Le Disciple,* was almost primarily a defense of "traditionalism" in religion and politics. Democratic anarchies are visualized as being destructive not merely of individual happiness but also of social health. *La Terre promise* is an analysis of the family as a "social cell" based upon confidence between husband and spouse, and between child and parent. *Le Démon de midi,* one of the finest of all Bourget's novels, makes the point that, regardless of the intellect, neglect of spiritual discipline may be morally fatal to men of middle age. *Un Drame dans le monde,* a swift and relentless story, is composed by placing one link next to another in a chain of ethical degeneration. *Le Sens de la mort,* possibly Bourget's last significant book, is really an argument for Christianity based upon its ability to endow life with a meaning.

In several respects the object of this work, carried on with unflagging diligence during fifty years, has been to write "a comedy of modern society". It hoped to diagnose the maladies of an age generally conceded to be far from well, and to direct attention to dependable remedies. Again, it is a demonstration of Bourget's own progress—the chart of his personal voyage, and so in a manner colored by individual preoccupations. Finally, the achievement of few other men is so consistently bound up with ideas, as these are furnished by the philosophies of the time. It may well be that this last aspect is the most important, and that the historian will turn to Bourget less for a picture of how men lived than for an analysis of how they thought. At all events no discussion of his significance will ever be worth while which assumes that because a man is a novelist he cannot possibly have thought earnestly about anything.

II

What has been Bourget's conception of the human ideal? The *Essais* do not make any more explicit claim for religion than that it is "one hypothesis among many". And yet, in the midst of an analysis of Renan, one comes upon an argument drawn up with conviction which may be restated as follows: when a philosopher has summed up all the reasons for denying that Christianity is true, he has still not attained that "certitude of which our intelligence has need, even as our lungs have need of oxygen, for he cannot explain why the noblest spirits, Pascal and countless others, have believed". Indeed the philosopher may find himself at the ghastly brink of universal emptiness, like unto the skeleton in Goya's picture. "The dead who belonged to ancient civilizations respond to the summons of the poet", says the essay on Flaubert, "and swear to him that the same void underlay the pleasures of yore, that the same distress and anguish appear at the end of every effort, and that whether he has been civilized or barbarian man has never known how to construct the world to the measure of his heart, or how to magnify that heart to the dimensions of his desire." Perhaps a melancholy awareness of this *vanitas vanitatum* is really at the bottom of Bourget's *Essais,* though mingled as yet—somewhat in the manner of Baudelaire—with delight in melancholy for its own sake. And yet this same "dilettanteism" is firmly condemned: "It seems that humanity is deeply averse to these changing avatars, no doubt because it realizes instinctively that it lives by affirmation and dies of incertitude". Melancholy must be de-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fined, after all, as "a logical product of the age"; and the age is sick nearly unto death.

The hero of *André Cornélis*, victim at once of his own temperament and of a deranged family life, is without the power to believe. Nor is there anything more positive in the esthetic souls in *l'Irréparable*, though this book could furnish many a clue to the growth of Bourget. It is with *Le Disciple* that the emphasis upon positive faith becomes pronounced. After Adrien Sixte has followed the story of his disciple to its tragic close—the story of a young man who, transferring the moral theories of his master to real life, has conducted an "experiment" through which both he and the girl who gave him her love have perished—he recalls, in the midst of the clamor of his soul for light, the magnificent phrase of Pascal: "Thou wouldst not seek me if thou hadst not already found me". From this time on, faith would be one of the constant themes of Bourget, the deepest note in such melody as he was destined to write.

But the way in which that faith was approached in his case is evident from the nature of *Le Disciple*. Adrien Sixte was, beyond any question, a fictionalized Taine, and the influence upon Bourget of this grim master of determinism is visible always. What interested him was the extraordinary, unimpeachable sincerity with which the ponderous logician built up his arguments, and the experimental character of his inferences. The essence of Taine's thinking was the "fact"—that impregnable, sometimes appalling *real thing* which no ideology could deny. Nor did he use the method for merely academic reasons. Like Mill or Darwin (and possibly these English affiliations had their weight with Bourget, always so alert to grasp what was happening across the Channel), Taine directed the major part of his attention to social life, hoping to establish a "science of sociology" whereby the interdependence of human cause and effect would be revealed. To Taine's vast study of the Revolution, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*, Bourget returns again and again, as to the book which effected a complete demonstration of how destructive were the romantic anarchies of 1789 and of how necessary repudiation of them is even now. Here Bourget finds material for his most recent essays, *Au Service de l'ordre*, quite as he drew sustenance for his earlier work.

The value of "fact" in religious and moral reasoning is of several kinds. Taine himself, for all his scepticism, concluded that whenever "the wings of Christianity have been broken" in western Europe, men have returned to the slime of moral barbarism. Balzac, too, had reasoned this way again and again, so that a lengthy *plaidoyer* for religion as a social safeguard can be extracted from his novels. Indeed, their reasoning has been so effective that all French Positivism has followed them, which explains why interest in Catholicism has always been so central in the system of reform proposed by Comte. At first Bourget well-nigh contented himself with this reasoning, though he almost never fails to anneal with it that element of sensibility which is displayed so well in his critique of unrestrained thinking. After having pointed out the "psychological wear and tear" which result from concentrating all the powers of the personality upon "sensitive thought", he quotes the old Hindu adage that "the universe calls for the extinction of all desire in God".

No doubt the celebrated preface of *Le Disciple* is here the best illustration. Addressing the "young men of the time", Bourget asks: "What have you gathered from books?" "Facing that question," he adds, "there is no honest man of letters, no matter how paltry he may be, who does not tremble with the sense of responsibility." The safety of France is important, and that safety cannot be entrusted to men ruined by false doctrines, and so transformed "into shallow egoists whose sole purpose in life is toying with sensations or ideas". That this is true the story itself

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then attempts to show. It should be borne in mind, however, that Bourget is not naïve enough to argue that Adrien Sixte is responsible for the actions of his disciple. He is described rather as a man who discovers, to his amazement and distress, that he is powerless to cure a spiritual disease which his own doctrine has induced. He comes to see, therefore, that an important element has been omitted from his analysis of the human mind and that his hypotheses need revamping. In other words: though Taine's devotion to science and a determinist morality based upon it is directed against romantic ideologies and egoistic dilletanteism, it itself may induce a habit of living which it is powerless to rectify because "something important" has been disregarded. That something is religious faith; and though the point is made more clearly at the close of *Le Disciple*, it is already present beneath the surface of the *Essais*.

Thenceforth Bourget, while sharing Taine's "scientifically reasoned" antagonism to "romantic and revolutionary maladies", directs almost the whole of his energy to proving the rightness of his critique of Taine with that master's own method. Each new novel, and each new essay as well (for example, *Pages de critique et doctrine*), professes to be an "experiment" by means of which facts establishing the necessity of religious belief are discerned. I shall have something to say later regarding the legitimacy of the method. For the moment it is well to note the essentially "pragmatic" character of this reasoning and to examine it carefully. For one who lived in Bourget's time, advocacy of religious belief on metaphysical grounds was virtually out of the question. The age had decided, with Kant, against the validity of the argument that cosmic order implies a Divine lawgiver. All the physical and mathematical sciences concealed a latent drift toward a more or less mechanistic positivism. Mystical points of view had been lost sight of so completely under the influence of a new intellectualism that the reasoning of Maine de Biran, destined to wield so extraordinary an influence, seemed fantastic. This meditative philosopher had, says Bergson, "conceived of a metaphysics which would rise ever higher and higher, toward mind in general, in proportion as consciousness descended deeper into the depths of the inner life". In other words, here was once again an Augustinian, contemplative philosophy.

It was also reminiscent of Pascal, however, because this fiery thinker had been confronted with almost the same situation in his time. Hemmed in by the "methodic doubt" and "assumptions" of Cartesian philosophy, the great author of the *Pensées* had said quite simply that religion is necessary because man must live. His most profound intuitions concern those outcries for the luminousness of Transfigured Goodness which have shaken the dome of man's world from the beginning. The proof of wisdom is the living of life. A theory which falsifies existence is a false theory. Everywhere in modern France these views, so much more fascinating than mere abstract thought, came to the fore. They constitute the ethical essence of Bergsonism. Ollé-Laprune, admirable Catholic thinker, included them in his system with the formula: "The art and science of philosophy are the art and science which produce good men". From all these, and from the pragmatists of the William James school, Bourget learned much.

The following passage from *Le Sens de la mort* may serve as evidence:

> In medicine the most logical theories are exploded when clinical experience contravenes them, and the most improbable theories are found exact when the same experience corroborates them. "Action" is, therefore, the ultimate and supreme criterion of truth. Suppose that facts patently verified prove that certain ideas, absolutely opposed to scientific orthodoxy, allow some men to adjust themselves to life, while certain other ideas, scientifically orthodox, do not permit such adaptation. Well, that is undeniable proof that scientific orthodoxy needs revision.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And the phrasing in the following passage from the general preface to the *Romans* is even more explicitly pragmatic:

> Experimental apologetic has for its purpose to establish the fact that, given a series of observations of human life, everything is found to happen under such observation as if Christianity were true. And this is the testimony which I bring after the examination I have been able to make of the sensibility of our time. Religion, therefore, is not in one place while human life is in another. When the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, in the ten fine chapters of its third section, comments upon the Decalogue, it has in mind the living passions of living men—of you, me, and our friends—and seeks to characterize and control these. If this commentary is correct, its truth will be confirmed by your and my lives. But how can a law be proved in the domain of moral action, unless one verifies the disorders which follow upon disregard of it and the signs of health and recuperation which attend its observance?

There are many similar passages. One may question the soundness of such reasoning, but it would hardly do to deny its intrinsic legitimacy. Bourget has belonged to a generation fundamentally interested, as has been noted, in discovering human reality. Since this had to be not brute matter or scientific formulae merely, but all those things to which Bergson has given the fine title of *données immédiates de conscience*, the behavior of man became supremely important. But though Bourget thus joins the army of French moralists, he differs from most of his contemporaries in one important respect. Aware of the influence of environment and society upon the life of the individual, he has emphasized sociological factors as matters usually ignored by the will. From the point of view of specifically Christian thinking, this is at once the most difficult aspect of his work to judge and possibly also the most immediately impressive.

Maurice Barrès declared that if he were to write the chapter of literary history which had to do with Bourget, he would "stress the idea of the return to the concept of order". From the beginning an antipathy to democracy is evident in Bourget's work, and occasionally it borders, one must confess, upon *snobisme*. Thus the *Essais* declare: "On the one hand, democratic habits do not favor the development of the superior man; on the other hand, the electoral laws do not encourage his participation in public affairs". But when he becomes the outspoken defender of a return to the old monarchical society, as for instance in *l'Etape*, it is for a number of definite reasons. The first of these, hinted at in several earlier books, is expressed succinctly in those reflections upon the United States which he called *Outre-Mer*: Frenchmen must "seek out everything that remains of the old France" and "destroy systematically the murderous work of the Revolution". No doubt a somewhat hasty encounter with a new and liberal world order left him more conscious than ever of the *cadre* in which all the human reality he sought and admired so intensely had been formed. The Revolution, he decided, had not merely substituted vagrant ideologies for that reality, but had squandered France's "treasure of social virtue", amassed by centuries of thrifty toil. Therefore it was to be repudiated not by advancing to a new order, but by returning to the old.

Naturally this conclusion could be bolstered up by appealing, with the Positivists, to science. The period was marked by a reaction against facile assumptions of political progress. Gobineau and others had formulated a theory of race, according to which some groups were endowed with the gift of rule which others were meant to obey. Nationalism, stimulated especially by new alignments of capital, was likewise insisting upon rigid subdivisions of the *genre humain* which Hugo had greeted so eloquently. And a Frenchman eager to advance the good of his own folk could not well help being appalled at the ravages caused by social doctrines which would end in a fierce assault upon re-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ligion, in a vast increase of those "dregs of humanity" the naturalistic novelists were cataloguing so generously, and in the decay of civic timber. Bourget expresses his own dismay frequently but never more impressively than in 1889 when he appealed to "science" as having proved the validity of "a conception of law which rests upon Divine authority, a conception of heredity which justified the principle of an hereditary aristocracy, and a view of the relations between man and the soil which conforms with that held under the old régime". These things are studied in several of the novels, with Bourget's characteristic directness.

I shall not try to prove, in ten lines, that this fusing of religion with an established social order is wrong. One point, however, can be advanced. While it is true that religious faith is based upon the natural man, that he in turn is to a considerable extent "fashioned" by social circumstances, and that these must be healthy if he is to be healthy, it would mean considering both humanity and religion notoriously dependent to hold that the social order can be, ideally, only one. It is, of course, ideally one at any given moment. Political institutions in general must nevertheless be studied genetically—that is, with reference to those who create them. Plato could not impose his "state" upon Syracuse, any more than Mexican liberals have been able to inject a "golden age" into the veins of their country. And once France had discarded an "old régime" it could not arbitrarily return to it any more than an army which has abandoned the use of cavalry can immediately take to sabres and horses. It must also seem that if Christianity be the leaven with which society can be perfected, it must be independent of a social mould.

III

With these ideas, with their presence or absence in the life of the time, the novels of Bourget are seriously concerned. But before examining their value as "demonstrations", it is imperative that one should have some understanding of what literary attitude they exemplify. The method employed is exceedingly eclectic and subtle, combining elements of Balzac, Walter Scott and Turgenev with much that is distinctly individual. Bourget, sensitive to the influence of the positive sciences and himself an eager student of medicine and law, has also been decidedly cosmopolitan of taste and outlook. Few men have written more sensitively, discerningly about Oxford and the Lake Country; and the very title of *Sensations d'Italie* testifies to an eager thirst for colorful impressions. But although this openness of mind and breadth of vision are to the advantage of Bourget's doctrine, they have prevented his being in any great measure a writer for whom local color—regionalistic or otherwise—is essential. Thoroughly French from the point of view of "teaching", Bourget as an artist has both the advantages and the limitations of a "European".

The fundamental assumption of his art is that psychology is an open sesame to an understanding of human conduct, or to *reality* in the sense we have defined. But diagnosis for its own sake was soon changed to "diagnosis with moral implications". The preface to *Le Disciple* repudiates that "intellectualism pure and simple" which hides "a ghastly drought of soul". But Bourget had also repudiated it six years earlier, in indicating the effect of literature upon the formation of young minds. He had declared somewhat later that "psychology ends in ethics, as physiology ends in medicine". In this respect, no doubt, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, who declared that his plays stressed a moral because his conscience had "ordered" him to write them so, has been the master of Paul Bourget. The relationship is evident not merely from the eloquent discussion of Dumas in the *Essais*, but likewise from obvious similarities in the literary practice of both men. Most important among these are possibly adoption of the "psychology of the crisis", the emphasis upon

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amorous passion, and an "intimate union of the dramatic sense with the sense of moral living". The three are certainly the foundations upon which Bourget's literary method rests.

No criticism advanced against him has been so general as the complaint that his novels are soaked in illicit love affairs. One rather severe judge has even averred that Bourget's Catholicism "has been expressed chiefly in terms of adultery"—an easy remark but an unjustifiable one. It would be difficult to express Bourget's point of view better than he himself puts it in the essay on Dumas:

> Is there a passion which injects itself more deeply than does love into the very sources of moral life, to purify or to poison them? When legitimate, love is the basic element of the family. When illegitimate, it produces the most dangerous anomalies of conduct and destiny. It began to impose its redoubtable influence upon us before we ourselves were.

Balzac had said much the same thing in his preface to *Beatrix*, philosophizing upon his adulterous heroine: "All has not been said when a generous woman has surrendered her share of social and aristocratic sovereignty. She remains bound forever to the author of her ruin, as a murderer is to the companion to whom he is chained". No doubt French writers were so deeply impressed with this truth because the loves of the Age of Romanticism, free in theory and very abundantly advertised, had drilled into the consciousness of Europe a hundred famous adulteries—from Sand and Musset to Wagner and Cosima.

But there was also the "psychology of the crisis" which (says Bourget) demands that the passions should be in progress, very clear, very vivid and of a character well defined. It is at once obvious that such dramatic material, impetuous from the beginning to the inevitable end, is the particular stock in trade of passionate amours. Bourget's whole art is one of incredible speed mastered. It depends upon time to render the effect of the "moral experiment" plain and indubitable. A person of such and such a sort finds himself at a crisis. How does he act? In such a way, Bourget's novels contend, as to show that his action proves the wrongness of a mistaken decision. The novelist must, therefore, dramatize the relation between decision and consequences in order to bring out the mere truthfulness of the story. And whatever one may think of Bourget's style (which is firm and supple, but not poetic), or of his characterization (which sometimes fails to evoke an individual), or even of the beauty of his achievement as a whole, there is no question of his supreme ability to solve the problem of time in story-telling—to convey a character's own impression of speed or slowness, of pause or rushing emphasis. Regarded from this point of view *André Cornélis* (in which awful delays are indicated with matchless economy) and *Un Drame dans le monde* (in which a guilty woman falls into moral abysses with relentless suddenness) are models.

The psychology itself, however, has a breadth and earnestness which, though the genius of observers like Proust may occasionally transcend it, makes the easy analyses of young Freudians seem hopelessly clumsy. First there is the vast knowledge of physiological detail which Bourget accumulated from a laborious study of medicine and psychiatry, and which he has used in the firm conviction that "states of the body" often "determine" psychic activity. One may easily stretch this kind of knowledge too far, but it seems to me that Bourget rarely does. Anti-deterministic in essence, he avoids the naïve mistake (so common with hit-and-miss writers) of talking about cerebral processes as if they were utterly independent of such matters as thyroid glands or spinal cords. Secondly, he has utilized fully the methodology of observation, as that was perfected by the Goncourts on the one hand and by Turgenev on the other, for the purpose of defining precisely the milieu in which a given

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

character had been formed. He probably never employed it to better advantage than in the curious, and for many of us repellent, *Physiologie de l'amour moderne*, but it has its share in almost every one of his stories.

Finally, there is the problem of analysis, conceived of as a kind of "inward observation" that accompanies the "scrutiny of outward circumstance" which observation proper is. Commenting upon it as employed by various great writers, Bourget says (in the preface to *La Terre promise*): "The minds of these writers, though very uneven and diverse in character, appear to have been endowed equally with a faculty of reflexion which enabled them to recognize, in a quite trivial detail, the obscure, hidden effort of very diminutive inner energies. Perhaps they are more interested in bringing these energies to light than in studying the results of their movement. The striking of a clock gong absorbs them less than does the activity of the springs upon the delicate interaction of which the striking depends. They are absorbed—without ever wishing to be absorbed—in the decomposition of the phenomena of moral or sentimental living". But though such analysis must be objective, in the manner of Bourget's master Stendhal, it is employed in such novels as *Cosmopolis* to reach a definite moral conclusion. How comprehensive is the basis upon which it proceeds may be judged from Bourget's clairvoyant appreciation of the subconscious, outlined in *l'Irréparable*, which appeared as early as 1883. "Underneath the intellectual and sentimental existence which we have more or less in hand," says this novel, "there extends a whole domain, obscure and shifting, which is that of our subconscious life."

Bourget's equipment, which he perfected by drawing steadily from the wealth of new research, has therefore been remarkably complete. But if one examines critically the uses to which it has been put in fiction, one is obliged to concede that a certain factitiousness—even a flavor of melodrama—usually qualifies the story. One finds it difficult to believe that Jean Monneron, the "liberal" professor in *l'Etape*, must of necessity be cursed, by reason of his convictions, with a dissolute daughter and a scapegoat son. Even in *Le Sens de la mort*, despite the circumstance that the character of Michel Ortègue, the agnostic physician, is drawn with a power which makes him one of the really acceptable scientists in fiction, Bourget permits himself to afflict unbelief with consequences which do not necessarily follow. We admire the concentrated force of the narrative, the riches of the analysis and the verve of the characterization; but we seldom feel that Bourget has made his moral as naturally, irretrievably, as Hawthorne and Hardy have made theirs. In only two novels—*Le Justicier* and *Le Démon de midi*—does the conclusion seem genuinely inevitable.

Bourget's reply to this criticism, which has of course been advanced frequently, is that the solution of moral problems advanced by life is not always neatly logical. He claims not that his dramas must necessarily happen, but simply that they may and do happen; and he is a little impatient with those who demand that a given case should always have representative significance. But even though life have a logic of its own, we have rightly come to feel that art must, if it wishes to be wholly convincing, sponsor a more relentless inevitability. And I suppose that Bourget's defection from this standard is to be accounted for less by apologetic over-reaching than by qualities of temperament. First, he is a man of great emotional energy—*l'homme sensible*, as the French have it. Such a torrent of feeling is compressed into all his major books that one has something of the sense of being in a storm, which twists all before it. To the exigencies of this torrent he seems to have made a form of sacrifice, justified if one is willing to concede that such an effect is entitled to manipulate its causes as it sees fit. In *André Cornélis*, for instance, the emotional climax would be tame, indeed, if the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hero failed to despatch the murderer of his father—even though it appears that he need not necessarily have done so.

Secondly (and this point has not been stressed frequently), most of Bourget's well-read, sensitive, intellectually aristocratic personages suffer from diseases of the will. To these he had already drawn attention in the *Essais*: "Because our epoch is afflicted with a malady of the will, a literature the psychology of which aids so well the progressive enfeeblement of inner energy enjoys a vogue. An idea is spreading that effort is useless and that the power of external causes is irresistible". Thus, for example, Calviers-Grandchamp, the marquis in *l'Emigré* who constricts his life within the narrow limits of a social outlook contemptuous of the world at large and therefore inactive, is simply a man who cannot want to do anything. He is to be regarded, therefore, not as typical of all noblemen but only as typical of a time, a class, which is without volitional energy. One large side of Bourget's outlook is surely here. He has attempted to attack materialistic monism because it denies will and thus also the power to will. And so the argument from life to show that people fail, or suffer, because they do not will lay quite ready. A man accustomed to volitional passivity may, in a crisis, become entirely the creature of determining circumstance. He may do something, whimsically or accidentally, which the logic of events would not insist upon. I think that from this point of view almost everything which seems arbitrary in the Bourget novels can be reconciled with probability.

IV

This analysis of Bourget cannot be carried further, even though what has been said calls for substantiation from the rest of his work. I content myself with the reflections set forth, which have aimed to show how he wrestled with the problem of actuality presented by his time. This had passed from revolutionary ideology to science or to disillusionment. One half of the thinking world was seeking a new certitude in monism defined as the complex of interwoven, absolute, unchanging natural laws. The other half had come to feel that anything more conclusive than epicurean egoism—the *culte de moi*—was not worth bothering about. In so far as both theses were concerned, Bourget was a reactionary. Having discerned that the two necessarily meant the same thing from the human point of view—the nihilistic despair of both Flaubert and Renan—he followed the lead given by modern concern with the "vital needs of humanity" through the stages of philosophic development which reach from Balzac and Taine beyond Maine de Biran and Ollé-Laprune. All this meant, essentially, a restatement of the doctrine of Pascal, and led ultimately to the same conclusions.

In Bourget's case—the case of a mind largely sociological in formation and direction—this return from chaos to order necessarily involved a social doctrine sure to impress most modern readers as too formal. And yet nothing can be more certain than that democracy in its present-day forms only too frequently becomes the prey of ideologies and the tyrannical shibboleths of majorities unless some way be found of conserving for it a habit of restraint which is to be learned only through the maintenance, by those endowed with spiritual authority, of just and abiding standards. Bourget's fellow Catholics, aware that their profession of faith implies those standards, are also conscious that these cannot be made effective in practice without the aid of a social and intellectual aristocracy willingly venerated by the host of men. But they are seldom convinced, to say the least, that this aristocracy is conferred by race or birth. Indeed, the more one studies the history of one's own group and the genesis of the forms of civil society, the more completely one is forced to believe that the human level is constant throughout all groups and that excellence is as likely to appear in one place as in another.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is impossible, therefore, that Paul Bourget's critique of modern society should not be subjected, as a whole, to increasingly careful scrutiny. But of the integrity and value of that critique, there can be no question. The product of a sincere, industrious and quite non-mercenary intellect, it bears the stamp of a warm enthusiasm for the "best that has been known and thought in the world". During fifty years it has followed the sinuous trend of life itself, finding no science or philosophic doctrine worthless *a priori*. Because of its constant zest for reality —artistic without succumbing to the esthetic preoccupations of the dilettante, serious without pedantry—the work of Bourget surely marks one important stage toward the restoration of a virile and reasonable European consciousness.

Nowadays, one may admit, fiction pursues a different quarry, being interested, as Ramon Fernandez declares, "in the organizing effort of the intelligence round an irrational reality". In other words, the younger novelists seek out those inexplicable individualisms which seem to them the most evident marks of human character and destiny. But while admitting that they give answer to a newly recognized demand, and that all art is in constant need of change productive of originality, it is important to avoid the facile error of imagining that a new adventure strips the old of all enchantment. Paul Bourget has chronicled some of the deepest urges of the generation immediately preceding our own. And it is still evident that we must understand them if we would attain a satisfactory basis for our own growth.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A LIBRARY THAT THINKS

by Lyman Beecher Stowe

When H. G. Wells made his flying trip to America twenty-five years ago he lunched while in Washington at the Round Table of the Library of Congress. This is the lunch table established by Dr. Herbert Putnam, the Librarian, primarily for certain of the leading men of his staff and himself but to which come men distinguished in letters, scholarship, the arts, sciences and statesmanship not only from all parts of our country but from the entire world. In his subsequent book, *The Future in America*, Mr. Wells, after complaining of the lack of a clearing house for thought in Washington, referred to this Round Table in these words: "There is an upper chamber that commands an altogether beautiful view of vistas of avenue and garden . . . I found at last a little group of men who could talk. It was like a small raft upon a limitless empty sea. I lunched with them at their Round Table, and afterwards Mr. Putnam showed me the Rotunda, quite the most gracious reading-room dome the world possesses, and explained the wonderful mechanical organization that brings almost every volume in that immense collection within a minute of one's hand. 'With all this,' I asked him, 'why doesn't the place think?' He seemed discreetly to consider it did".

I was present at this luncheon and stood with the great author and the Librarian when the former made this apparently banal observation. I have since wondered if it was not after all an instance of that uncanny penetration into the heart of a situation for which Mr. Wells is famed. As a matter of fact, Mr. Putnam was then in the early stages of his effort to transform a huge collection of palatially housed books—a static mass—into a dynamic force which should permeate the educational, scholarly and cultural life of the nation.

Herbert Putnam was appointed Librarian of Congress by President McKinley in 1899. He had declined the offer of the appointment two years before because he did not then feel that he had carried his work as Librarian of the Boston Public Library to a point where he could conscientiously leave it. In appointing him President McKinley said: "This library should become the greatest national library in the world. We believe you are the man to make it such".

The Library of Congress, while it never served the members of Congress so efficiently as now, has grown far beyond the suggested limitations of its name. It has become our national library, serving the reading public of the nation—more particularly, of course, the scholars and investigators. Its usefulness even exceeds our national boundaries and is more and more counted upon by foreign scholars. Last year, for instance, thirty-six scholars from thirteen different nations used its facilities, twenty-eight of whom represented twenty-one foreign universities. It is the largest library on the American continent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the second largest in the world. Large as it is, its size is one of its least remarkable characteristics. Its combination of scholarly efficiency with friendly helpfulness is far more impressive.

The Library has various nerve-centers through which it comes into direct contact with the public, either personally or by correspondence. Among these are the reading rooms and the Division of Bibliography.

The Division of Bibliography is the inquirer's gateway to the incredibly vast stores of information and wisdom contained in the Library's four million books. Some years ago a writer made the blithely unguarded comment in a magazine article that the Chief Bibliographer and his staff could answer any question that anyone chose to put to them. For weeks afterward they were inundated with questions both of the legitimate and fool variety. Among the latter were these: "What is the population of Hell?"; and, "What is the value of the gold fillings in the teeth of the dead who are buried in American cemeteries?" The Bibliographer once recorded the activities of his office during a single typical day: "The morning's work began with a call from a member of the House of Representatives for books on the history of textiles and dress from the earliest times to the present day. Next in order came a request from the secretary of the Milwaukee committee on the public debt who had become interested in the sinking-fund scheme of the British nonconformist clergyman, Richard Price, adopted by Pitt, and who wanted to know what there was in print about it, either expository or critical. This meant, before we were through, a typewritten list of between four and five pages, containing just forty-two titles. . . . At the time a preliminary investigation was being made into the ways and means of getting at the writings about Price and his sinking-fund scheme; a parallel inquiry was initiated for an engineer in Detroit who wanted books dealing with present-day agricultural conditions in India, China, Japan and various European countries.

"A sheaf of letters also had to have attention. . . . One was from a student in Iowa who wrote that he planned to come to Washington, provided the material in the Library warranted it, to continue his studies on Swedish neutrality during the World War. An inquirer in Missouri wanted to know whether a father and son were ever members of the United States Senate at the same time, besides Henry Dodge of Wisconsin, the father, who was elected to the Senate in 1848 and served until 1857, and Augustus C. Dodge of Iowa, the son, who was elected in 1848 and served until 1855. A naval officer in Italy wanted to know the names of the books that told of the circumnavigation of the globe by the frigate *Potomac* in the 1830's and of the travels of William S. W. Ruschenberger in 1835-1837. . . . A local newspaper man asked by telephone that books be put aside for him on governmental personnel and expenditure in 1826 and 1926, and a representative from one of the executive departments called in person for facts regarding Pullman transportation.

"The day ended with the receipt of a request from a member of the Senate for a list of biographies of all of the Presidents of the United States." And the day's business covered of course much more than has here been itemized.

A railroad magnate in the West once wrote a letter in which he quoted a few lines of a poem, which he said had been running in his head for years, and asked where he could find the complete poem. The Bibliographer said to his assistant, "The poem was very likely in one of his school-books. Find out where and when he went to school and then look up the school-books of that time and place". This the assistant did and within a few minutes she had found the poem. There was, of course, a large element of luck in this success, as there is in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all detective effort. It might be mentioned in passing that school-books form one of the most curious and illuminating collections in the Library. Since two copies of every book which is copyrighted must be deposited in the Library, such collections, barring occasional accidents, are complete. Perhaps the items in this collection which throw most light upon the manners and customs of our ancestors are the so-called *Complete Letter Writers*. In these may be found, for example, a model letter from an apprentice to his master.

Another inquirer asked on what United States naval vessel the naturalist, Audubon, went up the St. Johns river in Florida in 1832? By consulting the naval records in the naval library it was found that the lieutenant commanding the U. S. sloop *Spark* at that time proudly claimed the honor of having conveyed the great naturalist up the St. Johns river.

A letter was received asking whether German was ever proclaimed to be the official language of an American State? Knowing that that language was much used in Pennsylvania at one time and remembering the exhaustive character of the book on Germans in America by one Faust, the Bibliographer suggested that that book be consulted. Sure enough; the author referred to the common report that German had been the official language of Pennsylvania at one time, explained how it came to be circulated, and denied that it had any basis in fact.

While the writer was talking with the Bibliographer a senator called up to inquire regarding an alleged custom in the United States Navy of placing a "Christian flag" over the United States flag on certain religious occasions. The Bibliographer remembered that he had once seen a pamphlet on this subject. He called up the chaplain of the navy and requested a copy of this pamphlet which the chaplain agreed to send him at once. There are certain questions that even the long-suffering Bibliographer and his assistants do not undertake to answer. They do not prepare bibliographies to accompany theses; they do not dig up genealogical data (if they did they could do nothing else); they do not prepare book reviews or historical surveys for clubs or individuals. When questions are debated in Congress they prepare bibliographies for the members of Congress and copies of these they will furnish to clubs, schools, and even private individuals. Most great debates in Congress bring scores of such requests. Such debates are apparently echoed throughout the land in schools and clubs. These bibliographies cover such subjects as our international relations, the Permanent Court of International Justice, the jury system and disarmament.

Another focal point of particular interest in the Library is the Division of Maps, presided over by Colonel Lawrence Martin. Its interest lies largely in the singular diversity and scope of its contacts. Once when General Wood as Governor-General of the Philippine Islands was making a tour of inspection, he was surprised to find the Dutch flag flying over a building on the island of Palmas, one of the very small islands of the archipelago. He reported this curious fact to the State Department and they in turn asked the Dutch Minister in Washington for an explanation. He replied that his Government flew their flag because it was their island, which a Dutch trading company had centuries ago purchased from the native chief and which the Government had later acquired from the trading company. The State Department then asked the Spanish Minister whether this island had not belonged to Spain and been purchased by us at the close of the War with Spain together with the other islands of the archipelago? He replied that it had belonged to them and that they had sold it to us as they had a right to do. Then of course the fat was in the fire, and the matter had to be thrashed out before a Board of Arbitration presided over by a judge of the Court of International Justice.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colonel Martin with his maps was called upon to present our geographical case. In so doing he consulted no less than twelve hundred maps ranging in period from the seventeenth century to recent times. One of his most interesting and impressive exhibits was a map made by an Italian geographer in 1688, on which the little island in question was designated as Spanish territory. This ancient Italian scholar was obviously an impartial witness. We finally lost our case because Spain could not prove that she had ever exercised her alleged sovereignty.

From the island of Palmas to Long Island is a far cry, but Colonel Martin was soon called upon to furnish information from his one million maps to the Attorney General of New York State in connection with a disputed claim of the State to some land on Long Island. He is constantly called upon to testify and furnish evidence in the dozen or so boundary disputes between the States such as that between Vermont and New Hampshire and Ohio and Kentucky.

One of the most interesting maps in the collection belonged to Daniel Webster and played a part in the dispute between this country and Canada over the boundary line between Maine and that country. When the settlement finally agreed upon went before our Senate for ratification the senators from Maine blocked it because it did not give their state all she had claimed. In order to get the Maine senators to withdraw their objections Webster showed them confidentially this map, the existence of which he had carefully withheld from the British, because it indicated not only that Maine was entitled to far less territory than we had claimed but far less even than the British had conceded to us. The map's argument proved persuasive and the gentlemen from Maine withdrew their opposition.

In 1925 Mrs. Frederick S. Coolidge, the well-known patron of music, gave a hall for chamber music to the Library together with an endowment to finance a series of concerts in this hall, as well as in other cities, and to supplement the government stipend of the chief of the Music Division. He was thereupon designated as the occupant of the chair of Music. This gift led the Librarian to seek legislation to establish a body which should be authorized to receive private funds and hold them in trust for the benefit of the Library. The Library of Congress Trust Fund Board was as a result established by Congress. The Librarian has thus far secured approximately one million dollars in endowments which are administered by this Board. Four chairs have been established and another is assured. Beside the original chair of music there are those in fine arts, American history and aeronautics. The holders of these chairs not only administer the collections in their charge but, as experts in their subjects, they interpret the collections for the benefit of those who use them. To these holders of chairs have been added another group of specialists known as consultants. The consultants have no administrative duties, receive honoraria from the Library Board, but no Government salaries, and are not required to devote full time to the work. The two groups combined constitute what Dr. Putnam calls the "super-service". They neither merely administer collections nor do they teach or do research, but act as advisers in the development of the collections and as guides, philosophers and friends to those using them. They are experts in their subjects and familiar with the tools. Hence, they not only guide students and scholars in the most effective use of the Library's data, but in the use of any materials in their fields, wherever existing. At the present time there are consultants in European history, economics, social science, classical literature, philosophy, English and American literature, church history and general science. The service which the holders of the chairs and these consultants are giving the public is a unique and unprecedented addition to the customary service of this and other libraries.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These experts are gradually developing the Library into a great consultative university. In this they are greatly aided by the development of the Union Catalogue, which is a kind of *Who's Who* of books, giving the title, locations and the other pertinent bibliographical facts about practically every non-fiction book in the country and ultimately throughout the world. This herculean and unprecedented task is being financed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., at the rate of $50,000 a year for five years. The period is now half over and five and a half million titles have been included. This catalogue will mean that for the first time in the history of the world a student may locate and consult practically any non-fiction book which has ever been published. It will also save researchers the incredible amount of time which they have had to devote to searching for unusual books in their subject—searches which are always time-consuming and not infrequently unsuccessful.

Dr. Harold North Fowler, the consultant in classical literature, believes that the Library's collection of such literature, surely a field in which a Congressional library might be excused for relative weakness, is among the six best in the world. He is consulted in matters such as this: A manuscript designed to correct mistranslations in the Scriptures of Greek words and phrases was about to be published at great expense. Dr. Fowler by pointing out many mistranslations in the manuscript itself presumably prevented the wasting of a large sum.

Dr. Alfred Church Lane, last year's consultant in science, received questions from his fellow scientists in all parts of the country. One of these inquirers asked for certain information about gypsum which was contained in two treatises; one a government publication of the Soviets and to be had in Siberia only; the other in the Argentine. It was arranged to have photostat copies of both these papers made for the inquirer. The Library has a schedule of charges for the making of such copies. Last year there were studying at the Library, aside from the foreign students already mentioned, thirty-five specialists from bureaus and departments of the Government, thirty-eight representatives from twenty-seven different learned societies and one hundred and ninety-five graduate students from eighty-four different American universities. Books and papers on almost every phase of human thought and activity are continuously in preparation at the Library, particularly in the fields of history, economics and government. Desks and even study rooms are furnished without charge.

Dr. Henry Eldridge Bourne, the consultant in European history, furnished to a group engaged in preparing some pageants the information necessary to depict accurately the conditions of medieval France. He is planning courses of study in his field which can be followed at the Library by students who cannot afford to study in Europe.

Dr. Albert Francis Zahm, who has the chair of Aeronautics, financed by the Guggenheim Foundation, was asked by a student of aeronautical photography how he could correct and make accurate a composite collection of snapshots from the air which he had made of Alexandria. Not long after Dr. Zahm had worked out for and with him the mathematical procedures necessary to obtain this result, a request came from Byrd at the South Pole for essentially the same assistance. He wished to correct the snapshots of the South Pole which the photographers of his expedition had made.

A little later a professor in the Massachusetts School of Technology wrote to Dr. Zahm regarding two experiments he was to undertake and requested a bibliography of the material which would be useful. Dr. Zahm informed him that an Italian scientist had made an experiment identical with one of the two proposed and had reported it in full, thereby making its repetition entirely unnecessary. He thereby saved the professor

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many months of useless labor and expense. Another scientist requested data for work in a field in which Dr. Zahm himself had experimented so that he was able to send him exclusive data including a full bibliography.

Dr. Leicester Bodine Holland, who holds the chair of Fine Arts established with funds provided by the Carnegie Foundation, was once asked to help the owner establish the age of a certain hat-rack. He found that hat-racks were not made until 1810, and learned from the design books for the furniture-makers that the hat-rack in question had been made about 1855.

Dr. Holland has had photographed all the old houses, churches and other buildings of the Revolutionary period in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and is seeking funds to make a similar record of typical buildings, from the oldest up to 1820, throughout the entire country. These collections will be invaluable to architects and, as supplements to the Library's vast collections of American documents and manuscripts, to the students of our early economic and social conditions. Dr. Holland points out that many of the Library's collections, obtained through the copyright law, which were originally of little or no value or interest become in time both very interesting and extremely valuable. A striking case in point is the Library's almost complete series of Currier and Ives prints. Originally worth only the list price of ten or fifteen cents apiece, they are now very rare and valuable. For obvious reasons this Division cannot furnish estimated values of antiques for individual owners.

It need hardly be said that all this enormous development of the Library did not "just grow". Back of it all was the directing mind and will of one quiet, discreet, self-effacing gentleman. Herbert Putnam never raises his voice, shows any excitement nor allows anybody or anything to divert him from the even tenor of his ways. His manner is gracious and easy and he never appears to be busy or preoccupied. When a guest or any member of his staff of eight hundred persons enters his large and imposing office, which is as immaculate as its occupant, he never seems to be interrupted or to have anything on his mind except the business of his caller. He attributes the present achievement largely to the fact that he has always been content to take one step at a time—the next logical step—whatever that is at the moment. He has never alarmed or confused either the members of the committees of Congress, before whom he must periodically appear for appropriations, or in late years private benefactors, by vague and grandiloquent schemes for future expansions. While he must obviously think far into the future he expresses only such thoughts as apply to the present. Since he must have had in mind, even twenty-five years ago, at least the vague outlines of this vast institution of learning, is it any wonder that he challenged "discreetly" H. G. Wells's assumption that the Library did not think?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ESSAYS IN GRAMMAR

I. OUR WHIMSICAL GRAMMARIANS

by Janet Rankin Aiken

If you have ever read a book of sermons—and it is more fun to do so than you might imagine—you will notice that the author is apt to give far more attention to the works of the devil than to the works of God. Sketches of morality and right action may be there, but by far the greater part of the pages deal with sin. This attitude is supposed in some mystical fashion to promote virtue, as though virtue were the absence of vice.

The grammarian is not unlike the dominie. While he administers to his class a grammatical system which is supposed to represent truly the structure of the English sentence, in reality he gets excited, not over this positive system, but over your grammatical vices, the mistakes you have made or are making. A discussion of grammarians, then, must involve mainly a consideration of their attitude toward grammatical mistakes, and I propose beginning in true grammarian fashion by giving you my idea of grammatical depravity.

Fundamentally, it is saying what we don't mean. When we speak or write we have an idea to convey, and for that idea there is a perfect expression toward which we strive. When we distort or mutilate that expression in any way, by leaving something out, putting too much in, or saying the wrong thing, we are grammatically immoral.

Ambiguity is the crowning sin against English grammar. It enters into most other grammatical sins. Ambiguity in fairly pure form occurs in the sentence "I greeted the girl with a happy smile". You don't know which of two things that sentence means, and neither do I. It is ungrammatical. Another ambiguous sentence is "Jane and Mary came and she cried". Those sentences are sinful because they do not convey an idea clearly.

There are just two places where ambiguity may be condoned. One is in comedy and one in tragedy. Many jokes, as well as most tragedies, are built on misunderstandings, wilful or fortuitous. In the everyday business of life ambiguity has no place.

Omission (usually involving ambiguity) is another sin against English grammar. We find it in the sentence "I like Mary better than Jane". To be virtuous, that sentence should read either "I like Mary better than I do Jane," or "I like Mary better than Jane does". In the dishonest sentence, "Being a rainy day, I stayed home", an initial *it* would redeem the sin. Of course you know what that sentence means, but it does not say it. What it says is that I was a rainy day.

Redundancy is a very common sin against grammatical perfection. It is illustrated in "Besides, I also must go down town too". To my mind that sentence is fully as ungrammatical as "None of them never went nowhere". The multiple negative is bad because it is redundant, and the multiple affirmative is sinful for the same reason.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The fourth and last grammatical sin that I recognize may be called disorder. It consists in putting a right word in a wrong place. Under this heading we find "I only had a dime", "Being stolen, George refused to receive the goods", "I wanted to not try". The meaning is fairly clear in these sentences but they are disordered, hence grammatically immoral.

My own list of grammatical sins stops here, right where the grammarian begins. You will notice that none of my four headings would brand "Where was you?" or "I done it", as immoral. These sentences are unambiguous, compact, well-ordered. But alas, they are unconventional. It is the old distinction between immorality and unconventionality, and for practical purposes it is better to be immoral than unconventional. You will be less criticized for saying "I greeted the girl with a happy smile", than if you say "Where was you?" Yet the first is far worse than the second, because the first violates the chief purpose of speech, the clear communication of an idea.

I am not saying that convention in speech is unimportant. It is as important as style in clothes, or manners in society, or precedence at a diplomatic function. But it must be distinguished from morality in speech. And I think it might do no great harm if our grammarians should pay a bit more attention to speech morality, even at the expense of some of the conventions.

The violation of grammatical convention may be summed up in most of its manifestations under the term substitution. In unconventional speech *like* is substituted for *as* (do it like I do), *lay* for *lie* (he laid down), *come* for *came* (I come yesterday), and so on through a long, long list. Occasionally this substitution is a bit ambiguous; thus *flown* in "That stream has flown along for years" might conceivably be misunderstood, and hence a little sin is present here. But ordinarily convention is the only thing flouted.

I should correct a student who said "Where was you?" or "I done it", but I should not therefore despise him. I should tell a friend if her hat was crooked or her stocking had a run, but I should not think the less of her for these things. I should think the less of her if she lied habitually, and in the same way I might despair of one whose speech chronically failed to embody his ideas.

Perhaps a poor struggler runs two sentences together with only a comma between, thus: "I came yesterday, where were you?" That girl has not sinned. She has disregarded a convention of punctuation. Such conventions are constantly changing. If one is careful to violate them in the direction of progress—to anticipate the styles, as it were—I should applaud rather than object. I should certainly not correct a student who omitted the conventional but superfluous comma before the direct quotation, as in "I ran and called to her 'Come on over!' " I think that sentence looks far better without the commas.

Today the tendency seems to be toward the breaking down of conventions of all kinds, linguistic or grammatical as well as social. I think we could lose a few grammatical conventions with no great harm done. If these conventions rest upon reasoned foundations —if our grammarians are logical rather than whimsical—then we have good reason for upholding them. But is this really true? Are speech errors really so very erroneous?

One of my students once told me, "I can always tell a speech error by the sound; it sounds so badly. When I hear *ain't* or 'Do it like I do', it simply grates on my ear, so I know it is an error. All that people need is to cultivate an ear for correct English, and then they will be able to tell good speech from bad".

I hate like everything to disillusionize that poor girl. But the fact is that she doesn't hear speech errors with her ears at all, in the way she thinks. What hearing she does—and it doesn't go very far at that—comes through her habits and her prejudices.

Take the example she gave, "Do it like I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do". I admit that it grates on me as it does on her. I should never wittingly use *like* as a conjunction. But I recognize at the same time that this is pure prejudice on my part. "Do it like I do" is as euphonious as "Do it as I do". It is as comprehensible, as melodious; it fulfils as well the requirements of good speech. Moreover, just the briefest historical research will show that "Do it like I do" is every bit as good as many more respectable locutions, for example "It's the house opposite the bank". Perhaps you would be interested in knowing why.

Back in Anglo-Saxon the word *like*, then *gelic*, was an adjective. It is still an adjective in such phrases as *in like manner* and *a like result*. By a very natural transition, which dozens of English words have taken, *like* came to be used prepositionally. No grammatical authority put up the bars, and *like* as a preposition came to be accepted.

But there common folk attempted another transition, by beginning to use *like* as a conjunction (*do it like I do*). This again was a natural process which has been followed by dozens of English words. *Like* might have got by, like the others; but some grammarian noticed the transition and put up the bars; *like*-preposition must not pass to *like*-conjunction. And accordingly pass it has not, in cultivated speech. No one ever happened to worry about *opposite*. This happy word was once verbal in nature, the past participle of the verb *oppose* in Latin form. It has become noun, *the opposite is true*, adjective, *he took the opposite course*, and adverb, *she lives opposite to me;* from the last of these uses, the *to* being dropped, *opposite* has become pure preposition, *she lives opposite me*. Yet none of our grammarians has ever marked the wanderings of *opposite* and had it arrested for vagrancy.

I do not believe that it is any coincidence that our greatest writer of English was our most unconventional grammarian. Will Shakespeare seldom violated my four rules of grammatical morality, but in grammatical convention he is everywhere reckless and occasionally downright depraved. No English writer had less of an "ear for good English", as my student friend described it.

I am going to end this with a puzzle for you to solve. I don't know that it proves anything, but it may amuse you. I wrote a story not long ago as a Horrible Example for my grammar classes to correct. I packed it as full as I could of grammatical immorality and unconvention.

The puzzle is that I have never got a grammatical revision of that story which I consider as good as the original. The flavor disappears with the unconventionality and the thing loses its salt. Can you make it grammatical and interesting as well?

bloomer new york july 24 1932 dear mary being a rainy day i think i will write and tell you what jim and ellen done to try and turn my hair completely gray just like the ways of kids is they come running in one day last week and they says mom all the chickens is got out of the yard and we would like you to right away come and help us to try and get them back. Well i was out giving the chickens water just before this and i seen then that they was all in the yard so i says i guess they aint got far and i got up from where i was setting and took a broom from where it laid and went out well the chicken yard is behind the barn and we generally goes through the barn to get there and so i didnt suspect nothing but when we got inside ellen says being here mom theres something interesting to see upstairs and to really tell the truth those kids had fixed up a little playroom in one corner of the loft there was a table and rugs laying on the floor and chairs setting by the table and tea and cookies was all ready for a party the chickens wasnt out after all but jim and ellen says fooling me was the only way to get me to come and have a party its queer what kids will do aint it your loving sister jane

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

LYNN RIGGS, RACHEL CROTHERS AND OTHERS

by Francis Fergusson

MR. LYNN RIGGS'S latest, *Green Grow the Lilacs,* which is also the Theatre Guild's latest, is his best show to date. Mr. Riggs's plays are frankly romantic: the impulse which leads him to write is one of homesickness. In this he reminds me of Miss Willa Cather. In her best writing she usually recaptures the West of her youth, and her failures are often failures to integrate her remembered early experiences with the big industrial cities she finds herself in now. Mr. Sherwood Anderson, too, is always hesitating uncertainly between his nostalgias and his disgust with the present. This is no new problem for American writers. Mark Twain was at his best in *Huckleberry Finn* and at his worst in *The Gilded Age.* And now we have certain southern writers trying to return bodily to their native provincialism, while Peter Arno and *The New Yorkers* gambol cynically about in the bewildering middle of the stream. For better or for worse, theirs is the world of irresponsible cosmopolitanism and smirking speedy racketeering. But Mr. Riggs has made his choice: the world he writes about is a separate, inner world of memory.

Mr. Riggs's Oklahoma has plenty of charm. Cowboy songs, prairies, stars, sunshine and Southwestern drawls fascinate even the casual patrons of dude ranches. Besides, as Proust knew, there is a magic in memory itself. Proust sought in memory a kind of pseudo-beatitude, the beauty of a complex hallucination which affected all the senses as well as the emotions, and was so strong that it replaced, at least momentarily, the actual world. This experience came to him unsummoned as the result of some seemingly trivial sensation: the classic example is tasting the madeleine dipped in tea which suddenly restored to him the world of his childhood. Mr. Riggs's madeleine is the cowboy song. He says in the preface to his published play: "The intent has been solely to recapture in a kind of nostalgic glow (but in dramatic dialogue more than in song) the great range of mood which characterized the old folk-songs and ballads I used to hear in my Oklahoma childhood".

Probably this is why Mr. Riggs's world has a little of the Proustian dream intensity, especially for anyone who knows the Southwest. His people may not be actual, but they are alive, and have their own inner consistency. Their conversations are absolutely convincing in their own setting. None of our playwrights has a more authentic gift for dialogue, and I am thinking not only of *Green Grow the Lilacs,* but even more of some of his earlier plays, notably the first part of *Sump'n Like Wings.* But the trouble with nostalgic memory as a source for plays is that it gives no story. It gives mood, it gives character or pictures of characters, it gives even (with the aid of the cowboy songs) a rhythm of language and a vocabulary—above all it gives atmosphere. But everything is static, visionary. Mr.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Riggs seems to know this, and to be afraid to touch his material or make the slightest effort to order and construct it, for fear of destroying its peculiar magic. He says, "It seemed wise to throw away the conventions of ordinary theatricality—a complex plot, swift action, etc.—and try to exhibit luminously, in the simplest of stories, a wide area of mood and feeling".

The reason *Green Grow the Lilacs* is Mr. Riggs's most successful effort is that in its very ancient and simple love story he almost found a framework for his "area of mood and feeling". I hope this means that he at last recognizes the need of a technique, or a structure, and of a knowledge of his theatrical medium. It is not insincere to be aware of the tricks of the trade. His vision may be as authentic as possible, but if it is to perish as soon as translated to the stage it will not do us any good; it will remain private to Mr. Riggs.

The mounting of the play by Mr. Biberman, with settings by Mr. Raymond Sovey, relentlessly made it a "show", and this is one of the things an area of mood and feeling needs. Mr. Sovey contented himself with a fidelity to the Oklahoma landscape, and his peeling boards and wide backdrop flooded with sunny light often sufficed for those who knew the country. Mr. Biberman seems to have tried mainly to bring out the story (in doing which I suspect he cut and rearranged pretty radically) and with giving the show "pace". Mr. Biberman probably helped Mr. Riggs a great deal in finding his partly musical comedy form—a slight tale interspersed with songs. But where both Mr. Biberman and Mr. Sovey fell down was in scenes like the hazing of the newly-weds, the so-called "shivoree". The problem here would have been to see what the cowboy saw in it: to heighten its details into a kind of Rabelaisian legend. That might have made it fit into Mr. Riggs's dramatized ballad. Instead of this Mr. Sovey gave us correct but lifeless properties, and Mr. Biberman offended our ears with the meaningless loudness of his mob.

The acting was of a piece with the production. Miss Helen Westley always plays crones with great gusto, but in this case she did not bother too much to make sure what *this* crone was like. Mr. Franchot Tone and Miss June Walker were a little more like Broadway juveniles than Oklahomans, and Mr. Richard Hale was rather too consistently villainous. But these inaccuracies were not too distressing, as the actors took the show much more lightly than Mr. Riggs had done.

"The Green Pastures" Revisited

I went back to see *The Green Pastures* again after *Green Grow the Lilacs* to refresh my memory about the prime example of staged American folklore. Mr. Connelly had much richer material to work with than Mr. Riggs. The Negro spirituals are not only better music than the cowboy songs, they bring their own stories with them, and what stories! The tales of the Old Testament have a significance far beyond the Negroes that act them out, while the cowboy setting is its own little world. Mr. Connelly had the advantage of Mr. Roark Bradford's work, in which the Negroes and the Bible are brought to life together. But Mr. Riggs, as we have seen, had to find a way to make his characters move for himself. It seems that the less an author has to do, the better the result. We have at one end of the series Mr. Bolitho's *Overture*, which I reviewed not long ago, where the whole thing is too obviously Mr. Bolitho's snappy makeshift for a myth, and at the other *The Green Pastures*, a myth which Mr. Connelly discovered nearly intact and devoted himself humbly to translating into stage terms. Discovery of this kind (not to mention Mr. Connelly's superb craftsmanship) is of course more creative than confecting something supposedly new.

I found the actors, after a year of steady playing, a little stale. But with the high enthusiasm of the acting diminished, Mr. Connelly's lines, as lines, came out much more clearly. Considered by themselves they are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remarkably good, as one may now discover by reading the published play. Mr. Connelly's rhythm and vocabulary were influenced by the words of the spirituals, and his effects are richest when he is paraphrasing or developing, as the spirituals themselves do, an actual passage from the Bible. He is very good also when his Angel Gabriel or his "Lawd" talks naturally about fish-fries and ten-cent seegars and other objects of the Negroes' entire faith. The feeling is not unlike that of Christian's comfortable supper with Prudence, Piety and Charity, except that the Lawd is a real person and Bunyan's abstractions of virtues are too good to be true as individuals. It is only when Mr. Connelly tries to stage the sinful generations of Cain, Noah's rebellious contemporaries or the Babylonians, that his make-believe wears thin. He sees them not in the naïve terms of the rest of the play, but as smart Harlemites, and under their scepticism the Lawd shrinks suddenly to Mr. Harrison wearing a black coat. This shows how hard it is to hold a point of view not one's own, "to present certain aspects of a living religion in terms of its believers", as Mr. Connelly says in his preface. He has managed to avoid condescending to this innocent point of view, but he has not managed quite to forget his own unbelief. That is why *The Green Pastures*, like *Green Grow the Lilacs*, remains an expedition, though a very grand expedition, to Never-Never Land.

The Opera Version of "Peter Ibbetson"

While Mr. Connelly and Mr. Riggs try to lead their audiences bodily into their worlds of illusion, *Peter Ibbetson*, as everyone knows, is the story of a young man in search of such a world. The change since Du Maurier's time seems to be that Du Maurier felt obliged to show both the dream and what was supposed to be the reality. The result is a good sound melancholy romance, so complete that it still touches something in us in its tearful way. Peter's dream is also of a simpler, childish realm. It is associated with another language; it is inhabited by a beautiful and ethereal girl, and guarded by a dragon, who is Peter's father, and whom Peter slays. Even a Freudian would find much to approve in that—and when, at the end, it finds its romantic resolution—"Life is a dream", says the angelic girl—what can we all do but bow our heads in delightfully sad agreement?

It is this excellent tale which Mr. Deems Taylor and Miss Constance Collier have made into an opera libretto. Of course opera is an ill-defined convention, and it is notoriously difficult to keep the Philistines from smiling when grown people sing their remarks to each other. When the language is Italian or German the absurdity is less noticeable, and when the personages are heroic figures they approach more nearly the operatic style, and one expects an aria from them. But Mr. Taylor's people are pedestrians, like the Victorian English that Du Maurier was copying or the subscribers of the Metropolitan; and their language is relentlessly comprehensible. When they sing "How do you do, Mrs. Dean?" in beautiful soprano voices with strong French or Italian accents, the most trusting hearer is slightly disturbed. Even their soaring arias are written in conversational prose—but on the other hand, when Peter has killed his father, the music stops, and he screams, without even pretending to sing, "O God!"

Just as Mr. Taylor and Miss Collier failed to find a consistent style for their libretto, so Mr. Joseph Urban's settings, rich and elaborate though they were, established no consistent tone. Perhaps this is because Mr. Urban was trying to avoid effects like those of Renoir, or perhaps Manet. To my way of thinking, the kind of allusiveness that utilizes the work of a contemporary painter has a legitimate place in the theatre, particularly in such an out-and-out period piece as *Peter Ibbetson*. But then, if the collaborating artists had been more preoccupied with style they might not have made believe so heartily, and it is in the last analysis their utter make-believe that transfers Du Maurier's romance to us.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As Husbands Go

Miss Crothers's new play is both sane and realistic. She tells the familiar tale of American women who are bored with the men they know and go to Europe in search of excitement or understanding. Mrs. Sykes is a flighty but good-hearted widow who meets, and eventually marries, a wise and aging Continental, one Lomi. Lomi understands her, has real affection for her, and believes that with the aid of her money they can live very pleasantly together. Lucile Lingard, younger, and still married to a business man who does not understand art nor her desire to be a singer, has a romantic affair with an English poet. They take themselves and art very seriously in Paris, but back in Dubuque Lucile cannot bring herself to tell her husband all is over. This husband is supposed to be a very good man, ridiculously infatuated with his wife. But he emerges as the hero of the evening. When the poet comes to Dubuque to get Lucile, Lingard makes friends with him, and lets him see that he both loves and understands his wife. The poet learns to admire Lingard more than Lucile, who did not have the courage to make a clean breast of it, and he takes the next train east. This opens Lucile's eyes to her husband's husbandly virtues, and she settles down resignedly with him once more.

It will be seen that this tale is a little schematic: it is a *drame à thèse*. But in the production the arbitrariness of the people and the pattern does not matter much. After all, there could be such people. The play has no objective necessity, but it is not inherently improbable; and one is willing to grant Miss Crothers her walking hypotheses for the sake of the amusing situations they develop and the neat acting they make possible. For Miss Crothers and her cast are extremely skilful. Catharine Doucet as Emmie Sykes is delightful; Jay Fassett as Mr. Lingard is perfectly cast and not at all maudlin. Roman Bohnen as Lomi, Geoffrey Wardell as the English poet, and Marjorie Lytell and Robert Foulk as Emmie Sykes's daughter and prospective son-in-law, fill in the pattern without leaving a single bare spot. It is gratifying to feel, when they are all on the stage together, that they are all alive to the situation in their different ways. This proves that Miss Crothers is as clever at directing as she is at concocting plots and situations. Some of the minor characters are created entirely by what they do, by their "business". Miss Crothers is at her best in the minor characters, whom she can observe in her alert hostess's way without having to maltreat them to make them fit her plot. Lucile Lingard was the character that suffered most from this ugly theatrical necessity; and Miss Cahill, who played the part, was often at a loss whether to make a caricature of her or to try to take her seriously. She decided to play her "straight", and so fell into sentimentality at certain painful moments.

It seems to be very difficult to construct comedies without having at least one character that is played straight, with whom the audience can comfortably identify itself, and from whose point of view it can laugh at the foibles of the rest. If the object of comedy is not to make sensible people laugh, it is likely to be the dreary one of amusing the cynics. It is in the selection of this character to represent sanity or the norm that the author reveals himself, and it is there that he is in most danger of becoming sentimental. Miss Crothers, in making the unobtrusive and misunderstood Mr. Lingard (and to a lesser degree Lucile) the normal human being, in contrast to whom the rest are seen as foolish or amusing, was wiser than Mr. Barry in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*. Mr. Barry tried to see his people against a background of greatness; his criterion was Elisha-Nicholas Hay, and his woman was supposed to be a great woman. If Miss Crothers's intention was comparatively small, her accomplishment was sounder, better realized, more adult. So much so that only in the character of Lucile did her intention waver slightly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BIOGRAPHY

JANE AUSTEN *by R. Brimley Johnson* (DUTTON. $5.00)

It would seem that, after having made two long studies of Jane Austen, Mr. Johnson would, in a third, be getting near to the bare bones of his subject. He has evidently studied, with the care of an archeologist planning a reconstruction from a few poor stones, every known fact of Jane Austen's life; nor has he in his industry spared the rumors. The present work, it is true, is a matter of adjustments, of clarifications, and addenda. It is exceedingly hard to follow; it is organized with no great skill; and a good share of the material is so special that it would bore the ordinary reader. While the book is not, therefore, recommended as a general biography it is more than a mere industrious grubbing and canvassing after facts. There is an interpretative skill which turns all these details to good account.

Granted tact and disinterestedness in the interpreter Jane Austen is fairly easy to define. One doesn't have to take into account passions and impulses, the irreducible and the contradictory. She was one of those *reasonable* personalities in whose lives the pattern is fairly clear. The difficulties in finding it must be largely in the interpreter. In the face of so few facts, her biographers have been inclined to go by analogy. They imagine the typical artist—which is for most people the romantic artist—in her shoes. The anonymity, the provincial towns, the small cottages, the enormous and ever-present family, the duties that devour her time—these would be intolerable to the type; they must therefore, one assumes, have been intolerable to Jane Austen.

It is with the purpose of refuting this persistent over-simplification that Mr. Johnson has made the present study.

"It was", he writes, "the wedding of culture with domesticity that gave birth to Jane Austen and her works: genius was fairy godmother to the child." And again: her "individuality must have been differently expressed, if with equal power, had her family and her life been other than they were. They have their part in its matter, its spirit, and its form; that part was favorable and kind, both to the author and her books". She conformed outwardly, that is, and to an extent inwardly, to the conditions of provincial family life. She accepted its values—the moral ones as well as the respect for rank, for family, for tradition, for the clergy and for "good marriages"—she accepted in her own life these values and her books are constructed on them. But both in her life and in her writing she went beyond the provinces for final values: her wider judgment of character, her belief in the dignity of women and in love. There was however no conflict between these two sets of values: one was merely superior to the other, privately entertained, and revealed only in her letters.

Her family, it appears, had something to do with the success of her life. They were cultured and accomplished and well enough read in the literature of the time to applaud Jane's early burlesques. To understand the Austen family is, Mr. Johnson persuasively concludes, to understand why Jane found it comparatively easy to conform and yet to retain her integrity as an artist. They put all kinds of demands upon her time, but they were essentially congenial to her.

FREDERICK DUPEE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ST. LOE STRACHEY: HIS LIFE AND HIS PAPER *by Amy Strachey* (BREWER & WARREN. $5.00)

THE most enchanting parts of Dame Strachey's biography of her husband are those which tell of their courtship and early married life. She recovers a time which seems very distant. A nicely conducted young couple, even when definitely engaged, met only in drawing rooms or at balls. Young ladies were capable, positively and repeatedly, of falling off tricycles. These two enthusiasts kept well abreast of their time—perhaps they were even a little ahead of it. Mrs. Strachey graduated from a tricycle to a bicycle and pedalled heroically with those virtuosi, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb. In the course of a few years she and St. Loe were rattling across the countryside in a car that could manage twelve miles an hour, feeding it with water at the horse troughs on their way.

Meanwhile the shades of the *Spectator*, of high journalism and high politics, were closing around them. The second half of the book will be of most interest to those who are in some degree specialists in these two realms. Everyone who reads it, however, will be impressed by the influence which St. Loe Strachey exerted as editor of the *Spectator*. There was hardly a political issue in which he was not in constant correspondence with members of the British government or the opposition; and his ties with America were very strong. For many years he exchanged comments on international affairs with Roosevelt; and Dame Strachey gives a very pleasant account of their stay in the White House, and of Strachey's involuntary participation in a Cabinet meeting.

The book is neither a formal biography nor an "intimate portrait". Strachey himself left a record of his own career and thought, and it remained only to add detail and show more of the setting of his life. Dame Strachey, moreover, has been quite deliberate in preserving the reticences. Scandals and revelations are quite absent from her book; and it would be described best, perhaps, as a small addition to social history, a little overweighted towards the end with excerpts from letters and reports of events that have faded in interest, but full, none the less, of charm and common sense.

ALAN PORTER

ROUSSEAU, THE CHILD OF NATURE *by John Charpentier* (DIAL PRESS. $5.00)

NOT before his final pages does M. Charpentier reveal his own opinion of the effect of Rousseau's writings on modern European culture. Then the denunciation is complete: "The result of a hundred and fifty years of thought along the lines of Jean-Jacques's teaching has been a work of death, not of life". Supporters of this view having become so numerous in recent years M. Charpentier does not take time to state the evidence. By keeping to his task of biographer, however, he furnishes the much-needed human lineaments to the picture of Rousseau that emerges from the writings of his enemies, especially his modern enemies. Rousseau was no monster, although his ideas were often so monstrous. Nor was he anything so consistent as an abstraction. He was after all a human being, a rather poor specimen of human being. The fact should be remembered because his doctrines may best be understood as an enormous and ingenious rationalization of his own nature.

Because he possessed a disordered sensibility he was inclined to exaggerate his feelings, to elevate them to too much importance, and finally to mistake them for principles. Because he was the half-abandoned child of a poor clock-maker, forced to make his way in the mazes of eighteenth-century snobbery and convention, he had to protect his dignity with the notions that later went into the doctrine of Equalitarianism. From the data provided by M. Charpentier one could trace back the origins of all his ideas

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the same fashion. The inconsistency, opportunism and flightiness of his make-up are nowhere better illustrated than in the long-drawn-out affair with Madame de Warens. His abandonment of all five of his children by Thérèse Levasseur to the State was conduct of a sort that exceeded even his powers of self-exculpation. M. Charpentier admits, but does not explain, the almost total absence of "moral scruples" in Rousseau. The reader is forced to conclude for himself that this moral vacuum was a result of the fact that Rousseau's intelligence was of an inferior, even low, order. As an irresponsible little egoist he needed to use his mind no further than was required for the advancement of his personal ends. His mental processes more closely resembled the kind of petty cunning that would have guaranteed him a good career in either commerce or diplomacy. (One recalls the success that attended his efforts in that direction during his secretaryship in Venice.) But, being also a sentimentalist, it was essential to conceal the realism of his motives from both himself and others. For this he could have found nothing more effective than the diffuse rhetoric with which he managed to drug a whole generation.

WILLIAM TROY

THE SINGING SWAN *by Margaret Ashmun* (YALE. $3.50)

VERY few literary personages who have enjoyed in their own generation a position so commanding as Anna Seward's have passed subsequently into an oblivion so complete and unbroken. No one now reads any of her innumerable poems, and her principal title to immortality rests upon certain sneering foot-notes which Boswell appended to his *Life of Johnson*.

It is difficult for us now to realize how famous the Swan of Lichfield once was. She was the most widely heralded woman poet of the latter eighteenth century, sharing the literary laurels of her sex only with Fanny Burney. George Washington once sent a special envoy armed with documents of state to convince her that the aspersions she had cast upon him in her "Monody on Major André" were unfounded. Her letters, which she carefully prepared for posthumous publication, filled thirteen fat volumes. She herself, flattered by the applause of friends and critics, never doubted that she would occupy a permanent place among the English classics.

In inquiring into the causes of Anna Seward's present eclipse, Margaret Ashmun attributes it generally to the faulty poetic taste of the age, to a grim parental domination, to the bad training she received at the hands of Erasmus Darwin, to false ideals of what was becoming to a lady, and to the consistent and cloying flattery of a limited circle of acquaintances. Undoubtedly Anna Seward's intelligence and ability were, in fact, much greater than her achievements. Neither taste nor courage was lacking in the woman who despised the great Dr. Johnson and withstood him to his face, who declared Southey the greatest epic poet since Milton, who announced in 1798 that ignorance of the work of Coleridge would disgrace a reader of poetry. If Anna Seward's work does not now seem very notable, she remains as an individual, picturesque and somehow admirable. She belonged to an exceptionally interesting literary circle. Miss Ashmun's careful and rather discursive study of her includes biographical sketches of her numerous friends and associates.

MARGARET WALLACE

PAUL GAUGUIN *by Beril Becker* (BONI. $3.50)

To the reviewer the feature of *Paul Gauguin* by Beril Becker which proved to be of chief interest was the appended Bibliography, and for two reasons. It indicated the material which the author has ably summarized and coördinated in his text, and it provided the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

titles of an admirable "floating library" for those concerned with the phase of modern escape psychology which is centered in the South Seas. One rather amazing omission is Henry Adams's *Letters*. However, two excuses readily suggest themselves. Adams met the culture of the South Seas at too early a stage of its contact with civilization to be useful for a study of Gauguin, and he sought to forget himself there whereas Gauguin sought to find himself. But Paul Radin's study of the philosophies of primitive man, and Miss Mead's monograph on Samoan adolescence, and Lafcadio Hearn's travelogue of the French West Indies, the record of another wayfarer in an alien culture, all show how widely Mr. Becker has read in preparation for his task. Of the material he uses which is more closely related to Gauguin himself, perhaps the letters of the artist to his wife are the most significant. With them as evidence the brutal and unconvincing portrayal of Gauguin in *The Moon and Sixpence* by Somerset Maugham is shown to be pure and unjustified fiction.

To the reader who lacks either the time or the interest to turn to the already copious source-material, this biography, then, in the post-Maurois manner, is commended. The style is that of a high-class journalist, the handling is that of a novelist who desires to maintain contact with his facts, and the continuity is that of an experienced scenario writer. The sub-title of the book, "The Calm Madman", is childish, it is true, but the chapter headings, the imaginary conversations, and the many other reminders that the canny author is compelled nowadays to remember his cinema-minded readers, are not allowed to interfere with the presentation of an essentially integrated personality. Gauguin as stockbroker, as husband and father, and as artist finds unity when he is shown as a primitive seeking expression in a world too absorbed in its environment for interest in anything but impression. As a result, he paid the heavy price of exile and social disgrace for his creative moments. To say that he found disillusionment also in the tropics does not justify his treatment in late nineteenth-century Europe.

There is not a single color print of Gauguin's paintings in the book. The pictures chosen for illustration in their black and white reproductions give the impression of a phantasmagoric cosmologist, instead of the vibrant decorator that was Gauguin.

WILLIAM SENER RUSK

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD *by Gamaliel Bradford* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.50)

Most authors in their books fall far short of what they promise us. Gamaliel Bradford with his lucid thinking and the beautiful precision of his words, does much more than his undertaking. In this book he studies seven men of the present day, four of them living, Edison, Henry Ford, Mussolini, Calvin Coolidge, while the other three, Roosevelt, Wilson, Lenin, have lived so recently that there are many persons alive who have known them. We realize at once that the book does not stop with the cessation of the printed pages. Instinctively we go on to make those comparisons and summings up which Mr. Bradford must assuredly have made for himself. It is fascinating to have the clues within our hands and feel that we ourselves supply the necessary links.

It is possible to find plenty of evidence from which to draw our conclusions. We find that these seven who moulded life with their own hands have some striking similarities, despite certain differences. Roosevelt was an omnivorous reader and so is Edison. Ford has little use for books. The others take from books what is needful for their life-work but little more. In none of the seven does Mr. Bradford find that interest in the arts plays a vital part. Nor is religion—by which Mr. Bradford implies a need of God or a longing for God rather than an emphasis on conduct which some of them certainly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did have—an important factor. Nor does a passion for nature mould these men, though some may be known as outdoor men.

In some ways their differences appear. Lenin and Mussolini stand singularly alone, whereas Coolidge and Wilson, Mr. Bradford feels, could scarcely have accomplished their deeds without the aid of their wives. In none of these men does the acquisition of money seem to have been a pursuit in itself, though Henry Ford has amassed an astounding fortune. Throughout the utterances of the seven we find a startling insistence on work. They are intensely practical, none more so than Lenin the great organizer. There is fanaticism in Ford's speech concerning work, but Coolidge is a New Englander seeing work as a cold, ineluctable duty; and no days are long enough for Edison.

The mystery of the book lurks in the figures of Lenin and Mussolini. Even Mr. Bradford cannot tell us what Lenin would have done with the whirlwind he was in the process of harnessing when he died, nor what Mussolini will do if Providence and his Fascist guards save him from assassination during the next fifteen years.

JOHN WHITE: PATRIARCH *by Frances Rose-Troup* (PUTNAM. $7.50)

HISTORY is full of surprises and the path of the historian is a long and tortuous one. History never begins with the arrival of the colonists, nor even with their setting sail. It has its inceptions months or even years earlier. A new colony must have its adventurers, but it must also have its backers and financiers. So John White, who never saw the shores of Massachusetts, can justly be claimed as its founder, his influence rivalling or even surpassing that of the most famous figures of the early days. This Patriarch of Dorchester was busy enough with the concerns of his parish, with his many projects for the betterment of the town, his important part in the Puritan movement in England where he endeavored to restrain the extremists, was a member of the Committee who presented the "ministers' petition" to the House of Commons, and took part in compiling the Westminster Catechism and the Directory of Public Worship. His dreams, however, flew far afield and his importance historically rests on his unceasing interest in the founding of the new colony in Massachusetts.

John White was interested first of all, apparently, in the souls of the fishermen whose work took them away from home for eight or ten months of the year. Behind his organizing of the Dorchester Company which planted the first colony on Cape Ann lies his concern in providing spiritual instruction for the English fishermen who came each year to fish in New England waters. His interest continued when the Gloucester colony failed. It was John White who stood behind Roger Conant and his three companions when they followed the Indian trail to Nahum-Keike or Salem. Still later it was White who supported the Old Planters when Endecott came and exerted his authority ruthlessly to stop their growing tobacco. John White had his hand in every project which went forward for founding the new colony—the Dorchester Company, the New England Company, the Massachusetts Bay Company. He confessed to wanting to come to the new world himself. It is doubtful if the colonists could have done without his efforts for them at home.

This book is a monumental source book rather than a biography in the modern manner. It represents an immense amount of research, for there are innumerable questions to be settled—the possible relationship between the Dorchester Company and the Plymouth Colony, the authorship of *The Humble Request* which has been attributed to both Winthrop and Francis Higginson, John White's attitude toward the conversion of the Indians.

DOROTHEA LAWRANCE MANN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LINCOLN STEFFENS (HARCOURT, BRACE. $7.50)

As befits a distinguished muckraker, Mr. Lincoln Steffens muckrakes himself unsparingly—often with unpleasant effect. Born in California, he brought with him to the East the proud consciousness of that fact. Getting into college after a vigorous experience in a private school, he found the government of a university was "not what I had been led to expect", and "college education wasn't either, nor the student mind. . . . No one ever developed for me the relations of any of my required subjects to those that attracted me; no one brought out for me the relation of anything I was studying to anything else," he complains, probably with justice; what was equally bad: "The relation of knowledge to life, even to student life, was ignored, and as for questions, the professors asked them, not the students; and the students, not the professors, answered them—in examinations". As a result he shone only in the military department, where the regular officer in charge, observing him to possess the qualities of a drill-sergeant, set him to training the awkward squad, in which position he earned his only degree.

The outcome of his experience in being so much in advance of what he was taught led him to test the presumably wiser methods that prevailed abroad, with a first essay at the University of Berlin—only to find it like the other—organized for scholarship and not for learning. Heidelberg followed. Here he met with philosophers but with no better return, when "after the waste of a couple of good years of conscientious work I said good-bye to the good kept woman who had kept me so comfortable" and moved on to Munich. Leipzig followed with "music, science and love". The last was "unethical, but I did it". He met and fell in love, as he seems to have thought, with Josephine Bontecou, of Troy, New York, who like himself was seeking learning abroad. She was under escort of a vigilant mother. In Paris, "We had taken rooms in a Montparnasse hotel, Josephine, her mother and I, and Josephine went to work, her mother went sight-seeing, and I looked around. We were not going to marry until . . . we were back in America. . . . But after a few weeks of waiting we stole off to London, lived there the required twenty-two days, and on the twenty-second married on the way to the boat train for Paris".

With domestic responsibilities he now returned to America and found sustenance on the New York *Evening Post*, then the most conservative of metropolitan dailies. "For the first time," he observes, "I think, I realized that I was expected to support my wife and that meanwhile my wife expected my father to help us." Unfortunately for this view he had not informed his father of the marriage, "else he would not have thrown me off as he did—for my good". He had also advised his son to stay in New York; but "when my father and mother did come to New York", expecting "to attend our wedding, they were hurt to hear that we had been married several years".

By this time he had made good. His work on the paper led him to Wall Street, where he speculated, but with the result of accumulating a competence. Success in journalism led him to know the big bosses in politics and police—Platt and Croker, Inspector Byrnes, Inspector A. S. Williams, Devery. Then came the day when he joined S. S. McClure's magazine and began to muckrake the cities—St. Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, "corrupt and contented"; Chicago, hopeless and shameless—to at last find good government in New York under Seth Low. After the cities he raked sundry States, but with less result; next taking on Theodore Roosevelt, whose lack of scruples he seems to have approved. Then came the wrecking of *McClure's Magazine* through the rebellion of the staff, the founding of *The American Magazine* by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the rebels, with whom the biographer failed to fit, his mixing in the Los Angeles labor troubles, and the edge of affairs, ranging from Mexico to Russia, including expulsion from England and a second marriage.

Lastly he surveys a United States in the grip of big business and prohibition, to conclude with prophecy. America is preparing for a "dawning future". With all the strange medleys in which he has taken part he is sure "I have not lived in vain". This is refreshing intelligence, even though it takes eight hundred and forty-four pages to reveal the discovery.

DON C. SEITZ

LIGHT-HORSE HARRY LEE *by Thomas Boyd* (SCRIBNER'S. $3.50)

ONE of the saddest of stories is told by Thomas Boyd in his biography of Light-Horse Harry Lee, the story of a life which, beginning brilliantly, closed in poverty, loneliness and pain. There was, the author declares, "a crazily ironic design" in the events of Lee's life. His was one of the most famous exploits of the Revolutionary War, the taking of Paulus Hook; instead of being rewarded, he was court-martialed. He fought for Virginia's ratification of the Constitution of the United States; and the results endangered his own prosperity, and that of the South as well. He became governor of Virginia, and from popularity fell into persecution because he obeyed Washington and took command of the Federal Army against the Whisky Insurrectionists. He was born wealthy, and had splendid schemes for increasing his estate; but being improvident and unduly optimistic, he got into debt, and after a siege by sheriffs and bailiffs, was arrested and imprisoned. He originated the description of Washington as "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen"; and it was attributed to John Marshall. He fought through skirmish after skirmish and battle after battle during the Revolutionary War, and received the injuries which brought about his death at the hands of a Baltimore mob whose ferocity the cowards responsible for the maintenance of order were afraid to make any attempt to control. He died a forlorn, miserable old man; but they gave him a splendid funeral.

The book paints a vivid picture of certain phases of the Revolutionary War, and of the years immediately following; years of meanness, vituperation, scheming, braggadocio, and complete ingratitude towards those patriots who had given their blood that the Republic might be born. Lee was not the only one whose escape from British bullets was to prove his greatest misfortune.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION *by J. Mills Whitham* (VIKING. $5.00)

THE author explains in his Foreword that "the following studies are impressions, psychological enquiries, the main purpose being to discover how this and that outstanding figure in the years that remoulded France and Europe fulfilled his destiny and helped to determine his own fate; how he dealt with life and faced death, wandering in the labyrinth ordained for him, baffled and plagued at a time when men found themselves plucked, bare of conventional rags and decency trimmings and had to fend as they could, urged to acts of the greatest heroism, often reduced to a tragic despair, occasionally driven to a bestial fury".

To write a literary history of the French Revolution at this date is a task from which a man might well shrink; for to undertake it is to risk comparison with Carlyle or Michelet. It would seem hardly worth attempting without some new fact or some strikingly original viewpoint. The best substitute is a new method. This is the expedient Mr. Whitham has employed, "the predominant fact in the narrative of the man

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being shown as a predominant fact in the narrative of the Revolution". Strictly speaking it is the application and not the method which is new. For Mr. Whitham, who is a novelist, has applied to history a method resembling that of the old-fashioned novelists and, craving his pardon, Mr. Priestley, who drop the thread of the narrative when a character comes on the scene to go back and relate his history up to the time of his appearance.

In a novel this method heightens the interest by making for suspense; in a history it lessens the interest by causing inevitable repetition. For the historian is not able to control the character's first entrance on the scene; and in a series of biographical sketches, each of which must be fairly complete in itself, he is obliged to overlap a good deal. As a consequence Mr. Whitham's book holds the reader's attention less instead of more as he proceeds.

Doubtless this is partly why the sketch of Mirabeau, which comes first, after a rather beclouded chapter on "The Origins of the Revolution", seems the best; though the effect may be due partly to art, too. For as the author says "three men overshadow the rest: Mirabeau, Danton, Bonaparte", and the sketch of Danton is also particularly telling. That of Bonaparte is not. We hear of him; we do not see him.

It is here that the weakness of a method which is neither biography nor history is most apparent. After the welter and confusion of the Revolution, the rise and fall of one frenetic or uncertain figure after another, the near-success of Mirabeau and Danton, it does not take an admirer of Napoleon to look forward with relief to the firm and decisive advent of Bonaparte. As Mr. Whitham himself truly, if somewhat grandiloquently, observes, "It would seem as if Nature, Fate, Necessity, God, or whatsoever name we give to the primordial and unknowable Impulse at work, attempting to bring order out of chaos, made three distinct and potent experiments in search of its conquering Man of Destiny". But when Bonaparte does come into Mr. Whitham's story he seems anything but a conquering Man of Destiny.

The first reason for this is that Mr. Whitham has for Napoleon only a very qualified admiration, if any—an attitude to which the present reviewer is not unsympathetic. But the chief reason is that, from a narrative point of view, he has weakened the effect by the anticipation which the biographical method entails; while, from a biographical point of view, the details are too severely limited by the necessity of considering the man primarily as part of an historical movement. If the author is to cover by this method the crowding events from 1789 to 1799 in a single volume, extreme compression is imperative. This is no doubt responsible, too, for the style, of which the following is typical:

"Paris also shouted 'Betrayal!' The Assembly pronounced their Country-in-danger decree, and called for new battalions. Carnot was sent to Lille to do what he could; and he did much, strengthening the fortifications, trying to restore discipline. He forebore to mention punishment, quiet in his habitual self-possession, reasoning with the men: they had been duped by clownish terror, he said, victims of their own feebleness. He left a repentant army, went back to Paris to report."

One recognizes in its cadences the style of a well-known weekly magazine, whose avowed *raison d'être* is to save the commodity from which it takes its title. Mr. Whitham is out to save its twin entity, space, and the result is not happy. The suppression of conjunctions and elimination of inverted or dependent clauses, when continued for any length, become so monotonous as to be almost hypnotic.

It is a style which lends itself better to action than to thought. It enhances Mr. Whitham's tendency to succeed better with the objective than with the subjective, and with the violent, radical, or destructive than

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the calculating, idealistic, or conservative. Next to Bonaparte he fails most noticeably with Talleyrand, by whose irony he is unable to be amused, and La Fayette, with whose simplicity he is unable to sympathize. One sees the King in his public character only; and the importance of the part which Marie Antoinette played with her intrigues in bringing about the foreign war would surely escape a reader who did not bear it clearly in mind for himself.

"*Ce qu'il y a de consolant*," Mr. Whitham quotes by way of terminating, "*c'est qu'on arrive nécessairement quelque part.*" The conclusion at which he arrives in the present work seems to be this: "Between the death of Louis XVI and the final Republic, France had seven monarchs, six of whom died in exile; for the Revolution, like John Brown's body, mouldering in the grave, had a soul, for what men call good and evil, and went marching on, reëmbodying itself, blundering, perishing, reviving, indestructible like the soul of all things great and small in the eternal and incomprehensible flux".

This is doubtless true of the Revolution viewed in its philosophical implications. But a much more obvious and hardly less valuable conclusion which emerges from the story of those ten years of terror, oratory and turmoil as it is told in the present volume, is the truth of the maxim which Saint-Just formulated but no Revolutionary hero exemplified before Napoleon: *On ne peut pas gouverner sans laconisme.*

JAMES ORRICK

THE DUKES OF BUCKINGHAM *by Robert P. Tristram Coffin* (BRENTANO. $3.75)

MEN are remembered for strange things: the first Duke of Buckingham as that "Steenie" on whose neck James I slobbered in mawkish affection. Now Mr. Coffin has told again, for readers who like their biography imaginative and sensational, the strange story of the young man who came to Court in tatters, lived to drip diamonds through the royal palaces of Europe on terms of schoolboy familiarity with kings, and, still busy with his hobby of stirring up wars, died in a tavern alley by the hand of a one-armed madman. His biographer will fail to convince all but the most uncritical, however, that his hero was much more than a conceited rogue on the magnificent scale or that he played so important a rôle as Mr. Coffin suggests. Such men are made by their times; they do not make them.

His son, the second and last Duke, was he of whom Pope wrote the terrible poem:

> On once a flock-bed, but repaired with straw
> With tape-tied curtains never meant to draw,
> The George and Garter dangling from that bed
> Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
> Great Villiers lies. . . .

A political chameleon, a meddler with less scope than his father, this Buckingham was a wit for all that, and his rhymed couplets had a bite and ease that might well have played havoc with so lush a biographer as this.

IRIS BARRY

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POETRY

OPUS 7 *by Sylvia Townsend Warner* (VIKING. $2.00)

ONE of the most accomplished writers of English living today is Sylvia Townsend Warner, yet I do not think she has yet found a satisfactory book to write. *Lolly Willowes* and *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* were perfect in their kind, but they were exquisite trifles, charming and fastidious examples of humorous fancy. *The True Heart* had much of the same character, but it contained scenes of a different kind, suggesting that a very original command of reality touched by beautiful imagination, irony, and delicate tenderness, lay within the writer's grasp. Such was the scene in the disorderly house. In one or two short stories (I have in mind especially *The Son*, which appeared in a recent number of the *Atlantic*), Miss Warner has shown a simplicity of expression that contained the seeds of immense power, and has revealed a surprising turn for the macabre.

Miss Warner's best work has been, and despite the virtuosity of *Opus 7*, I think still remains, prose. *Opus 7* is a narrative poem in which she indulges even further her stylistic brilliance, and very much further her taste for the macabre spiced with humor. The theme is amusing. A village crone who lives only for gin is her protagonist. Poor old Rebecca trudges nightly to the tavern where occasionally some toper, in contempt or pity, gives her the drink which, according to Miss Warner, is the introduction to Dionysian ecstasies. Rebecca has "the green thumb"; whatever she plants grows, and her neglected little patch of garden is a riot of blooms. One day a stranger buys some of her wallflowers. The incident is the ironic means of building up an income by which she is enabled to high-hat the topers in the pub, and carry home her own bottles to swig with all the elaboration of private ritual. The poem ends with her death and apotheosis in a dipsomaniac revel in the graveyard.

Miss Warner has chosen, whether through irony, cynicism, playfulness, or what combination of impulses I know not, to make this theme the vehicle of at least superficially poetic imagination, of an astounding display of too self-conscious style, and of at least well-feigned sympathy with her poor blowzy old hag of a character. Many passages vie for quotation. The apostrophe to gin is an obvious choice; but the concluding scenes, especially Rebecca's, wild, terse, and astonishing dialogue with the newly buried corpse, carry the work to its height and redeem much of the conscious glitter of the early pages by a strange and original note which has a quality quite its own. Here is a passage on village gossip which is both clever and quotable, almost as Dryden was quotable:

> Blest fertile Dullness! mothering surmise,
> rumour, report, as stagnant water, flies,
> whose happy votaries, stung by every hatch,
> divinely itch, and more divinely scratch!
> Nothing's too wild for credence, or too slight
> for fancy to apparel it in light
> fetched from the half-wit moon: a gatepost can,
> if rightly studied, feed the mind of man
> with a rich entertainment; an old goat
> more plenteous bawdry than the French priest
> wrote
> bequeath, sprat wag more waves than any
> whale;
> but, best of all, strangers deck out a tale.

The following lines in their simple vigor would be terrible indeed if they inhered in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a poem which could be called anything but a *tour-de-force*:

What though the patriarch was stale in vice,
renowned for ancient rape and present lice,
and Bet had held her head up with the best
until her seventh bit her in the breast
and graffed a cancer there?

No one could wish Miss Warner's cleverness dulled or her strange flights of imagination clipped. But she has talents fit for the making of a great book, probably in prose rather than verse, although one cannot speak certainly of gifts which, within the limits of form at least, are as versatile as hers. I for one should like to see her go back to *The True Heart*, and take up the seeds that began to sprout there and that seemed to open a way to the full growth of her as yet disparate faculties in some truly appropriate vehicle.

JONATHAN GENTRY, *by Mark Van Doren.* (BONI. $2.50)

WHEN novels, memoirs, diaries, monographs, and special studies have dealt so profusely with the settlement of the West and the transformation of America from a nation broadly agricultural to one shaped and overshadowed by industry, it is natural that the poet should try his hand at the rich imaginative possibilities of the theme. Mark Van Doren does not put history too much in the forefront of his book. The stage is occupied by specific members of the Gentry family, whose career in America begins during the settlement of the lands reached by the Ohio, embraces the Civil War, and ends in the modern era when the family has been reduced to two brothers, one a city lawyer, the other a discouraged farmer, and both childless.

But while Mr. Van Doren embodies his historical perspective in the personal destinies of individual people, I do not think that his characters have quite escaped from his theme. The first Gentry, somewhat indistinctly idealistic about the lands of the Ohio, to which he emigrates from England on account of a disappointment in love, is a figure of no great sharpness. The Jonathan Gentry who fights through the Civil War makes an impression of greater if not very marked actuality, largely on account of his love for his more volatile younger brother and his almost maternal anxiety for him as they endure battle and march together until the boy's death. The last two Gentrys, drawn in much greater detail, are correspondingly more solid; and the wife of Jonathan Gentry 5th, a lonely, unfruitful woman, frustrated in her longing for the city, is the most individual of all the figures, as well as the one whose qualities have the largest share of poetic significance and feeling. Yet even these two brothers and the discontented wife are somewhat too obviously selected and arranged as types adapted to the historical perspective to be very strong or moving *dramatis personæ* in their own right.

The versification of the poem would have gained much from severe chastening. Mr. Van Doren tells the bulk of the story in a freely rendered blank verse, and this is interspersed with rhymed passages and songs. The latter, it seems to me, have been mistakenly conceived. They certainly do not much resemble the actual songs of soldiers or boatmen, or (when Mr. Van Doren reaches the modern period) popular phonograph records. Yet they are anything but literary songs. They seem to have been born of an unlucky mésalliance between the two.

In a work on so broad a canvas it would have been well-nigh impossible to avoid all pedestrian lines; this is one of the penalties which the poet must accept who would embark on an ambitious narrative. Perhaps it is unfair to make an example of one particularly treasurable lapse, but the line

Sam was there already with his oil can

shows what can happen to a poet in a moment of inadvertence.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One of Mr. Van Doren's best passages describes the motives of the men who enlisted in the Civil War:

Harry Camargo couldn't stand his wife,
And so he went the first month, and he marches
With a charmed life and shines among the faithful—
Happy because it's treason to go home.

This is capital. It has the force and pointedness of *John Brown's Body*. The Civil War section of *Jonathan Gentry* suggests comparison, however odious comparisons may be, with *John Brown's Body*. Mr. Van Doren has not equalled the abounding vigor and resourceful imagination of that much mightier work; but *Jonathan Gentry* has its own excellences, and of course is devoted to a wholly different object. Broad in scope, ambitious, and sincere, its main strength is in its well-grasped theme. It leaves room for much higher achievement in characterization and in poetic style.

THEODORE MORRISON

EARLY POEMS *by Humbert Wolfe* (KNOPF. $2.50)

Now that Mr. Wolfe has chosen to reprint his early poems, it seems to me time to point out that, even as these earliest poems prove, Humbert Wolfe's talent was not in its inception, is not today in its maturity, an original talent at all. Mr. Wolfe enjoys great popularity both in England and in America. In this country he has received the recommendation of academicians when other poets far more important have been granted no such laurels.

Mr. Wolfe's poetry is like a mirror in which you will see, if you stare long enough, the ghostly images of the Romantics, the Pre-Raphaelites and, perhaps most frequently, the Esthetes of the Nineties. Now and then in this pale beauty there appears a more vigorous ghost of some Modern—T. S. Eliot or Edith Sitwell. This is the reason for Mr. Wolfe's popularity: His poetry sounds familiar, it is of the stuff of poetry—images, music, rhythms—all familiar. Such verse reflects the mind of the usual fairly cultured, moderately well-read man—the mind wherein lie all kinds of poetic fragments—the uncritical, remembering mind. Therefore the average reader, possessed of such a mind, accepts such a poet as Mr. Wolfe whole-heartedly.

Mr. Wolfe presents in a sprightly Preface his personal reasons for reprinting these early pieces: he feels tenderly toward them, he remembers himself as he wrote them. He emphasizes the fact, all too true, that these poems were never in the fashion of the day. In writing them Mr. Wolfe was practising the technique of older poets. He had not, as yet, acquired the facility which soon was his own, but he was already unoriginal:

Here is the well and the delicate water
Far below gleaming, the starred white branches
Fragrant with flowers. Here is the noontide,
Even the grasses grow at the edges.
What then is gone?

Not very much is gone! There are a few additions, modern scenes, modern reflections on the scene, but, for the most part, nothing is gone from the older pattern of poetry—save its sincerity. I'm not accusing Mr. Wolfe of *personal* insincerity. I am, however, stating that as art his verse is insincere, since it springs from no defined poetic personality.

There are but three elements in any man's poetry which may be said to prove him poet in his own right: the first is a clearly defined attitude toward life (which may or may not be original with him), the second is the use of original imagery to translate this attitude toward life, the third is rhythm which in some subtle manner is the poet's own, inseparable from his unique emotional quality. Mr. Wolfe employs no personal rhythms, uses no very original imagery, and has, so far as I am able to discover, no de-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fined attitude toward life. In *Requiem* we find the pallid echoes of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Esthetes, in *The Uncelestial City*, a banal attempt at modernism in jingling rhythms, in *Lampoons*, the epigram badly turned. In none of these books has Mr. Wolfe made any contribution to the writing of poetry.

As a critic Mr. Wolfe holds a much higher place. Here, although he is not a great imaginative thinker, he proves scholarly and illuminating. His *Notes on English Verse Satire* show scholarly analysis; his *Craft of Verse* is a well-written treatise.

EDA LOU WALTON

NAKED HEEL *by Leonora Speyer* (KNOPF. $2.50)

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Speyer is all equipped to write poetry, like the soldier in peace time, she spends most of her time polishing her equipment. In *Naked Heel* there are precisely two poems which could possibly interest us in Mrs. Speyer as poet, and these poems are both somewhat incomplete. For the rest, though we may try to read them again and again, we cannot be moved by them. They have no individuality; but they are very suggestive. They suggest, among other things and vaguely, a twentieth-century Christina Rossetti, and Miss Millay, it always seems to me, has already proved that phenomenon to be impossible. They suggest a devotion to the best of the contemporary American women poets. They suggest above all that Mrs. Speyer has a keen sensibility with regard to what is good and bad manners in poetry, and has applied it to the surfaces of her work, which are always easy and assured and in excellent taste. But her poems remain for the better part entirely superficial. I except the prefatory poem and the one entitled *The Maid Medusa*.

In *Dark Garden* we find this verse:

> Far fledgling owls
> Are thinly whimpering,
> And brooks run high;
> The yellow moon is like a cat that prowls
> The gables of the sky.

And in *Prelude* on the next page:

Between hill and hill
The west is heaped high on the world's hardy ember,
Somewhere are red leaves burning pungent and somber,
Smelling good;
And a star stretched wide as a lark on the wing,
Flies overhead.

The first is not altogether bad and the second is not altogether good; they represent in either direction the farthest boundaries of a mediocrity which is none the less obvious for its technique and its music. Mrs. Speyer is never foolish, never offensive, and never exciting. She has chosen this motto for her book:

> Better than spurs the naked heel
> For flesh is truer far than steel;
> Naked heel to the Winged Side—
> Happy is he who thus shall ride!

But in this case, I fear, the naked heel—if it really is naked—drums a stationary Pegasus.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A VARIED SHELF

A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: *Vol. I. From 1607 to the Beginning of the Revolutionary Period. Vol. II. From 1750 to 1815. By Charles Angoff* (KNOPF. $10.00)

THE first two volumes of Mr. Angoff's history are well printed and bound; the pages are crowded with dates, with excerpts, with forgotten and half-forgotten names, and with data on such extra-literary institutions as the theatre and the newspaper. But for all this enormous deposit of fact, one finds neither analysis, continuity, nor design—none, that is, of the qualities for which one looks to a critical history of literature.

They are in the first place an immensely forbidding pair of volumes. Mr. Angoff has followed the text-book scheme of organization, with its divisions and subdivisions, its generalizing introductions and abbreviated biographies; and this, though it may invite reference, rather discourages a continuous reading. This arrangement of his materials conflicts, moreover, with his estimate of their importance. If, as Mr. Angoff asserts, the literature of the time was almost entirely bad, why single out for individual discussion such palpable nonentities as Daniel Gookin and John Josselyn? Why pile up unimportant names, dates, and particulars; and why multiply the excerpts into hundreds?

There is in fact the question as to why, in a four-volume history, two whole volumes should fall to the sterile pre-classic centuries. It is, as one realizes after a few pages, a sort of inverted enthusiasm for the period that has led Mr. Angoff into his long history. The whole business has been undertaken in the spirit of refutation. His opponents in the debate are those historians of the last century —now hardly more than spectres—whose national feeling led them to overvalue the literary worth of our early writers. Mr. Angoff's iconoclasm consists, in short, of attacking a set of idols which ceased a generation ago to be idols and which, we may be sure, were never that to any but a few benighted patriots. He lines up, therefore, his poor forgotten chroniclers, balladists, and theologians and shoots them down, one after another, with almost no quarter and practically no distinction.

Such a general slaughter, when it goes on for a whole volume and when, as here, it is done with little brilliance of wit or style, seems to me a stupid misuse of history.

Mr. Angoff might have spared his readers this dull and bloody spectacle had he *assumed* the artistic impotence of the period and then been silent on all such values. The snub would have meant volumes and would, at the same time, have left him free to meet the period in the only way in which, with the exception of two or three figures, it can be met: as social history, as a time of intense preparation. But with this kind of analysis Mr. Angoff will have little to do. He makes no extraordinary excursion into the Puritan conscience and he brushes only the surface of the political idealism of the later period. In both cases he gives the facts substantially as they are to be found in other histories, and puts upon them the conventional twentieth-century interpretation. Impatient, almost contemptuous of the Puritans, he is, to select one instance of his attitude, outraged by the *New England Primer* because, presumably, it fed children on Original Sin instead of the sweet enlightened diet of humanitarianism.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Jefferson and his fellows Mr. Angoff has a wistful condescension—something that is almost sympathy—but no very great understanding. Yet both these attitudes, both bitterness and condescension, seem futile approaches to the past for the historian of literature. One wonders how, in the absence of more fruitful motives, they could have lent this historian energy enough for his task.

FREDERICK DUPEE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE GOOD LIFE *by Charles Gore, D. D.* (SCRIBNER'S. $3.00)

BISHOP GORE does not mistake reasons for motives, and he finds the springs of life not in abstract thought but in practical experience. But he believes that for the full satisfaction of the human personality the good life should be clearly conceived and rationally defended. This is a noble view, and if it is true (as I think) that ultimately Bishop Gore has nothing to say except to those who start already convinced of his position, it is likewise true that his candor and scholarship must command the respect and may well be the shame of the great majority of those who are inclined to patronize the faith for which he contends. The works to which Bishop Gore refers in his notes form a course of reading that embraces Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, the philosophy and sacred writings of India, Muhammadanism, Old and New Testament Scholarship, Greek Philosophy, Scholasticism and the Church Fathers, modern philosophy, and a sufficient acquaintance with modern anthropological and physical science to bring the blush to the cheek of any casual sceptic who may suspect that bishops move in a limited or prejudiced intellectual horizon. Among the most valuable services of the volume to the general reader who cannot concur in Bishop Gore's conclusion are the rich suggestions for further intellectual inquiry in so many directions which the explicit references in the footnotes contain.

"My starting point", writes Bishop Gore, "is to investigate the conception of the good life with its postulates as mankind in general has understood it." Accordingly he considers in a series of interesting, and to the general reader very convenient and valuable, chapters what seem to him the main significant systems of religion or of the good life for man. Especially valuable seem to me the appreciations of Zoroaster and of Stoicism. After this historical survey follows a series of critical chapters, leading eventually to the conclusion that the good life for man, and accordingly the most rational view of the world, are best embraced in the system of Christian monotheism. Bishop Gore belongs to the Kantian tradition of those who believe the sense of obligation, of conscience, an absolute fact not traceable to natural origins, but ultimately demanding the postulate of a personal God for its rational explanation. But Bishop Gore, more definitely than this, is a liberal orthodox Christian. So it comes about that he regards the Hebrew Prophets as inspired by God, not meaning by this phrase any "doctrine of the infallible book", or any crude revivalist notion, but meaning none the less that the personal creator of the universe uttered his wishes for man in a unique and special sense through the prophets of the consecrated race. And so in turn it comes about that Bishop Gore charitably considers Zoroaster inspired also, in the same sense, if not to the same degree. And this perhaps explains why Zoroaster is made the subject of an extended chapter, while Aristotle's ethics of the golden mean, and the system of Epicurus (surely a very definite and important view of the good life for man), are dismissed in "appended notes" to his discussion of Greek ethical philosophy.

To one who stands outside the fellowship of Bishop Gore, it must inevitably seem that his reasoning begs the ultimate question, and that every difficulty which arises is solved by the method of the *deus ex machina*. Those who share Bishop Gore's views will, I im-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

agine, find no new contribution to Christian thought or to the philosophy of the good life; but all who pick up the book may find in it the evidence of abundant and high-minded scholarship devoted with profound sincerity to the quest of moral dignity for man and its foundations in reason.

THEODORE MORRISON

AMERICA'S WAY OUT: A PROGRAM FOR DEMOCRACY *by Norman Thomas* (MACMILLAN. $2.50)

To most Americans, Socialism has a dark and bloody sound. It is foreign in ideology and organization. Many of its devotees are foreigners or Jews. It seems neither indigenous nor authentic and has not polled more than a million votes in any presidential election. As a political party, Socialism could scarcely be weaker. It is as a political force that Dr. Thomas evaluates it and he concludes that there is enough socialistic sentiment in the country to produce "a mass movement of men and women who want an integrated program", experimental in technique but based upon sound values and principles.

In this volume the leader of the American Socialists attempts to outline the values and principles of Socialism, considered not as a political game but a world force. His conclusion is that Socialism is merely the common-sense program for a democracy which will eventually tire of the "drift toward war" of current international society, which will object to a "standing army of the unemployed" of between 1,400,000 to 4,200,000 in the fattest years of our recent prosperity, which will object to such economic crises as the Panic of 1929 which shifted "from eight to ten percent of the total wealth of America from the little fellows to the big ones", and which will insist on running its economic affairs along sensible businesslike lines.

It is, in fact, the inefficiency rather than the spiritual stagnation of the New Capitalism to which Dr. Thomas objects. He dislikes a community which knows the number of pigs in the country but not the number of the unemployed. He objects to the "reckless waste of our own and posterity's heritage which . . . characterizes our exploitation of natural resources". He reckons that rent and land speculation absorb fifty billions (more than 50%) of our annual national income and that a simple and candid financing of electric utilities would save the electric industry $250,000,000 of interest a year. He points out that "Inflation and deflation of currency since the World War have confiscated more fortunes and shifted more wealth than a dozen French Revolutions".

In short, it is Socialism which is truly conservative, while the ideal of a "nation of 'contented cows', sleek and well fed, yet docilely standing for milking by the lords of credit and land and all our other economic dynasts", an ideal which maintains that the "system can't go wrong if we'll leave it to Henry Ford, Owen D. Young, and Mitten Men and Management", engenders spiritual values which are subversive to the State. Dr. Thomas observes that

> The man with five more installments to pay on his car, four more on his radio, three on his furniture, and so on, takes no chances. He possesses these things, but they own him.

This book is a sane and well-written exposition of the fact underlying all our political and economic machinery, that there is a ferment of ideas about government and property which defies the dogma of our political and economic prohibitionists. This ferment is working among the strata of the educated and the thoughtful, whose hands are not tied by timidity and whose eyes are not stopped by possessions. For the first time in our history, Socialism is receiving responsible and respectable native leadership and support and is adapting itself to the practical necessities of American politics. For the Socialist Party, as such, there remains only a vista of forlorn hopes, despite the well-founded belief that the election of 1932 may

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

see enormous accessions to its voting strength. For social ideas and purposes, however, there is a better chance than ever before that, steering its course between the skyscrapers and adding-machines of the New Capitalism and the arbitrary dogma of Communism, it may offer the American democracy one way out of the present stagnation in human affairs.

JOHN CARTER

HUMANITY UPROOTED *by Maurice Hindus* (CAPE & SMITH. $3.50)

IN this book Mr. Hindus has achieved an infrequent synthesis of heart and head. A Russian until the age of fourteen, he does not merely contemplate the Russian scene: he responds to it and gives it to us in all its colorful reality—still, for all the changes wrought by the Revolution, the baffling, fascinating Russia of its great novelists and dramatists. But he is also the impartial investigating scientist, using to the limit his entrée as a Russian, visiting and revisiting even the most inaccessible regions; and the ideal reporter, displaying an almost painful eagerness to conceal his private opinions and let us see for ourselves what is going on. In a word, Mr. Hindus is an artist, his book a work of art. It is not, indeed, complete, but it could not be. It is not perfect: Mr. Hindus is not a specialist in all the fields he touches upon.

Mr. Hindus leaves little doubt as to the awful earnestness of the communist movement. In the very midst of an age enervated by self-criticism, the Russian communist exhibits passionate devotion to a cause of whose worth he harbors no doubt. The destroyer of churches, he is a happy priest at the shrine of the religion which is communism. To the distraught he offers a guarantee of "peace of heart and soul". He knows not divinity—unless it be Lenin. But if a man's business may be his religion, if the atheist but reveals the immortal soul within, and if the essence of religion is emotional attachment to socially approved values, then the communist worships under one name what he flouts under another.

Unfortunately, this religion is not one of quiescence. It is as militant as it is fanatic. Unready for war now, it subscribes to Kellogg piety. But it looks to its armor and bides the inevitable hour when the masses shall rise. The ill-famed Russian iconoclasm is but the counterpart of its fanaticism. It is not the intellectual scepticism of Western Europe and the United States. Both are deadly, but the touch of one withers while the other demolishes—then sweats to reconstruct. The Russian hue of resolution is not sickly with too much thought.

But this blindness, as it is made manifest in Mr. Hindu's account, is precisely the thing over which the student of society is apt to grow most curious. He perhaps feels that decadence is adventitious to self-criticism, but in any case he is not at all sure that intolerance can give surety of a progressive social order. The sloughing of old beliefs is not enough—not unless the Russian is enfranchised from the limitations of human nature. But in fact the Russians no less than any other people are creatures of habit. Habits form willy-nilly: the machine age may be modern but the mechanical age is as old as the hills. And the one vital question concerns the kind of habits to be formed—rigid or flexible? To have different or even new ideas is not sufficient; too often the liberal of today is the hard-riding conservative of tomorrow. There is needed the presence of intelligence, its ingression into habits and customs. It is this which fights encrustation, and in so far as it is absent the Russian Revolution contains no certain promise of a nobler society.

Meanwhile, the spectacle continues, to the guilty delight of the social scientist fretted by his own inability to conduct or even to suggest major social experiments. Big questions are being propounded. Is God a necessary

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hypothesis? Is the family a *sine qua non* of a stable community? Are men really polygamous, women monogamous. Is nationalism an unnecessary shibboleth? Is material gain after all the only effective stimulus to endeavor?

The questions are not yet answered and may never be answered. For the experiment may be interrupted. Mr. Hindus at least does not see the communists any too firmly seated in the saddle. They are after all but a handful, relatively. And while the merchant, intelligentsia, Jew and scattered aristocracy may be negligible, the peasant bulks largest. The peasants are Russia. One hundred and twenty million they are, minor capitalists all of them, wedded to their ancient folkways and, as the result of the Revolution, grown conscious of their individual wants and collective power. A form of communism has been impressed upon them. The youth of the land has pretty well succumbed to communistic ideas. Nevertheless, the mass of older peasantry are a menace to their proletarian masters; and nobody knows this better than does the communist.

LESLIE MANOCK PAPE

THE FLAME OF ISLAM *by Harold Lamb* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $4.00)

RICHARD LION-HEART, Frederick of Hohenstaufen, Knights of the Temple and Knights of the Hospital, St. Louis of France, Saladin, that very great gentleman—these are only a few of the many splendid names that blaze high through Harold Lamb's new volume, *The Flame of Islam*. For of all the many romances with which history is packed, there is scarcely one more exciting, enthralling and glamorous than that of the Crusades. To the glowing qualities of that adventurous epoch Mr. Lamb does full justice. His book is like a fine tapestry resplendent in rich crimsons and deep midnight blues, a tapestry, moreover, through which runs like a thread of gold the high idealism that inspired many of those who spent youth and fortune, life itself, in the vain effort to win and keep the country they deemed holy.

The book is a very long one, but the reader's interest never slackens. It begins in the year 1169, when Jerusalem had been for some seventy years in the hands of the Crusaders. It was then that Nur ad Din, the great sultan of Damascus, began to preach the jehad, the Holy War which was to unite all Islam in an effort to recover Jerusalem, a sacred city to the Moslems as well as to the Christians. The end comes in 1291, with the fall of Acre. After the loss of that, their last fortress, the only crusaders left in the Holy Land were the captives and the dead. During this period of over a century a great drama was enacted, full of meanness and heroism, ambition and self-sacrifice, cruelty and tenderness. Richard Lion-Heart massacred twenty-six hundred Moslems in cold blood; Eleanor, the young wife of Edward of England, sucked the poison from her husband's wounds; Pearl Spray, the one-time slave girl, ruled in Cairo, alone for a while, then with Ai-Beg, the Kurd, and the one-eyed Baibars the Panther. Baibars, once a slave, became sultan of Cairo, and actually did the things usually ascribed to Haroun al Raschid. The Mongol horde threatened Europe, while Pope and Emperor waged pitiless warfare, the one against the other. But it is impossible to give here more than a faint idea of the movement and drama, the romance and excitement, the intrigue and adventure of this fascinating book—a book far more thrilling than any dozen ordinary romances. If you want to be transported into a period of curiously mingled luxury and barbarity, take part in miraculous escapes and deeds of high emprise, while at the same time acquiring an admirably clear and well-coördinated view of an important section of the world during certain extremely important and eventful years, don't fail to read *The Flame of Islam*.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MEMOIRS OF MARSHAL FOCH *translated by Colonel T. Bentley Mott* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $5.00)

THE reader expecting a vivid personal account of Marshal Foch's war experiences or any startling revelations of military policy will be distinctly disappointed in this book. It is a calm, rational record of the war by the commander-in-chief of the Allied forces, necessarily quite technical at times, and characterized throughout by complete objectivity. This detracts from its readability and it will suffer in comparison with other more exciting war memoirs, but the very qualities which will make it less popular render it all the more valuable as a permanent record of the Allied operations on the Western front.

Marshal Foch, to pick out one instance of generalization, shows himself critical of that policy of taking the offensive, always attacking, which dominated the French army at the beginning of the war and which is so often held up as the only strategy which can assure victory. "In 1914," he writes, "it (the High Command) was destined to meet with useless repulses and cruel losses as a consequence of its exclusive passion for the offensive and its ignorance of all save the methods it comported and which were applied to every situation." Yet there is no direct reflection upon the men responsible for this policy. His detachment is as great as though he were surveying the campaigns of Napoleon.

In describing the steps leading up to his appointment as Allied commander-in-chief, it is true that Marshal Foch does comment somewhat caustically upon Clemenceau. He relates that after the Doullens conference the Prime Minister turned to him and said: "Well, you've got the place you so much wanted". But his resentment at this imputation of excessive ambition only calls for the restrained statement: "It was not difficult to answer him—and Monsieur Loucheur joined in my reply—that to assume the direction of a battle which during seven successive days has been largely lost, could hardly be the object of any great desire on my part, but rather constituted, by reason of its risks, an act of duty and sacrifice in the service of my country".

In regard to General Pershing the Marshal is always generous and fully appreciative of his high services to the Allied cause. There is no hint of the somewhat strained situation which developed as a result of Pershing's insistence upon an autonomous American army. Foch states that he was always in entire agreement with Pershing's demand and realized that the soldiers of a national army never fight so well under the orders of other than their own officers. He desired to satisfy American aspirations just as soon as it could possibly be done without slowing down operations in which separate American divisions were already taking part.

The *Memoirs* are a graphic, clear-cut exposition of military developments in which political questions seldom intrude and personalities never. They might perhaps be better entitled "How I Did My Job—and No Foolishness".

THAT NEXT WAR? *by K. A. Bratt* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

IN this study on the perennial question of what we are going to do about the next war, Major K. A. Bratt, a Swedish staff officer, bluntly declares that what we now face is world organization or world annihilation. Without sensationalism he points out the danger spots in the existing international situation and depicts what the outbreak of armed conflict would mean in the modern world; without losing his practical and realistic point of view he then outlines the campaign which he believes the forces of peace should undertake to prevent these future wars. It is an arresting and provocative book, a challenge to the modern world as to what it intends to do about the most serious problem with which it has ever been faced.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Major Bratt divides his study into three sections. The first concerns what he calls the modern war society and depicts the tremendous rôle which aviation has assumed and the decisive influence it is bound to have in any future war. The second is the usual outline of "dangerous points"—the Balkans, Communism and Fascism, the revolt in Asia, Western imperialism. The third is "The Struggle Against the Next War" in which the author presents his case for a closer organization of international society even though it involves, as it must, some sacrifice of national sovereignty, and for the creation of a world executive with the force to act promptly and decisively should peace be menaced from any quarter.

It is true, as Major Bratt admits in his preface and introduction, that this book "is in part a compilation". So extensive is the literature dealing with the next war that there is little left to say which could really be described as new. The proposal for a world executive having an international air fleet at its command, such as the author proposes, has often been debated, and there is nothing revolutionary in his opinion that the hope for peace is centered in the working class democracy of western Europe. Nevertheless *That Next War?* is so objective and restrained, so clear-cut, so sincere, that it is a very real contribution to the peace offensive and deserves to be carefully and widely read.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

AFTER ROBESPIERRE: THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION *by Albert Mathiez* (KNOPF. $5.00)

THE MAGNIFICENT COMEDY *by Meade Minnigerode* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $3.50)

THESE two books, appearing practically simultaneously and dealing largely with the same period of French history, are excellent examples of opposing schools of historical writing—schools opposed both in spirit and in method. *After Robespierre* is a work of scholarship, meticulously documented; *The Magnificent Comedy* is history, composed, it is true, partly of contemporary citations, but citations carefully selected for dramatic effect and usually without hint as to their source. This does not mean that *After Robespierre* is not interestingly written or that *The Magnificent Comedy* is insincere. Both works are able specimens of their respective manners both in writing and in unity of effect, and anyone interested in the somewhat neglected period between the fall of Robespierre and the advent of Bonaparte ought to read both. While the political and social attitudes of M. Mathiez and Mr. Minnigerode are utterly different, this very fact ought to give the unbiased reader a better chance to make up his own mind.

After Robespierre covers a considerably shorter period of time than the Minnigerode book, dealing, as it does, entirely with the months between the 9th Thermidor, year II, and the 4th Brumaire, year IV (otherwise from the fall of Robespierre on July 27, 1794, to the establishment of the Directory on Oct. 26, 1795). M. Mathiez is a convinced partisan of Robespierre and a hater of Danton. This is perhaps his chief weakness, though his contempt for the Thermidorians such as Tallien, Fréron, Fouché, Billaud-Varenne, and Collot d'Herbois is shared by every historian and by every thinking man. But the value of the book does not lie either in the justice of its fundamental ideas or in its portrayal of the protagonists, but in the recital of facts, especially of what occurred in the various sessions of the Convention up to the period of its dissolution. Here, interestingly put down, we have the record of the tortuous ways in which the worst elements of the Mountain, men who were utterly corrupt opportunists, managed to retain power —and their heads. It is a record which in barefaced hypocrisy is without parallel in the history of democracy. Billaud and Collot alone were punished, and only by deporta-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion—the others managed to last and flourish up to the coming of Bonaparte and some of them, such as Fouché, long after Bonaparte had passed. *After Robespierre* is a splendid study in the possibilities of trickery in a so-called democratic government.

The Magnificent Comedy covers a larger canvas, taking in the Great Terror, the last days of the Convention, and the Directory. Mr. Minnigerode is no believer in Robespierre nor in the Thermidorians either, but he has a great enjoyment of their gyrations, and even a greater enjoyment of the gyrations of their female aides. With humor and often with wit he portrays their characters—the characters of Fréron, of Tallien, of Barras, of Mme Tallien, of Mme de Staël, of Josephine Beauharnais—magnificent comedians all, in a magnificent comedy! In pages filled with color he draws for us the preposterous life of that preposterous period—its parvenu brilliancy, its rioting, its speculating, its debauchery. It was a period without honor, without taste, without ideals; a period of pleasure-lovers dancing over a weltering mass of poverty; a period of utterly corrupt reaction from the iron days of the Terror. And in its latter pages looms the ever-increasing figure of Bonaparte, who was soon to purge France of this corruption by an even more frightful, if more glorious, cathartic of blood. It is an able book, even though there are a few passages of "jazzy" writing which might have been omitted.

GRENVILLE VERNON

OUT OF SOUNDINGS *by H. M. Tomlinson* (HARPERS. $4.00)

LUCKILY for us H. M. Tomlinson has written a varied shelf of books, all of them interesting, entertaining, individual. Whether he writes of Drake or of Hardy, of Gilolo or the Amazon swamps, or Fleet Street, he has something of moment to say, and he says it in writing that is to average prose as vintage wine is to home-brew.

One cannot write a review of *Out of Soundings* any more than one can write adequately of a great poem, a symphony, a bottle of wine, a beautiful woman, or one of Hardy's or Tolstoy's novels. It is absurd to call it a collection of essays and sketches, although perhaps one must affix the trade label and so appease the deity of a methodical and commercial world. Very well, it is a collection of sketches and essays.

I must quote a few words: "There must be categories for books, yet I do not think Books of Travel is precisely the place in the index for the *Arabia Deserta*, or Thoreau's *Week on the Concord*, or even for Bates's *The Naturalist on the Amazon*. The right good book is always a book of travel; it is about a life's journey". Mr. Tomlinson's *Out of Soundings*, under this definition, is a book of travel, for it is about a life's journey, in far countries and near, in little things and great, and it is a "right good book". And it is a book of travel that takes the reader far beyond common horizons. Mr. Tomlinson has in the order of his words a magnet that draws one up an Alp or through a South Sea jungle, or back to Hakluyt and Elizabeth. And like an ancient he asks questions that stimulate the imagination, questions that must be answered from the depths of one's experience, and that men must answer if they are to find peace or a hope of survival.

Mr. Tomlinson is a planetary traveller and explorer—in more senses than one—and out of his experience with men and events he has brought a fine cargo; he has seen empires and kingdoms sicken and die, and he has been in islands scarcely visited by whites since the days of Drake, with their timeless villages where nothing changes beyond birth and death, sun and tides. He writes of Thomas Hardy—and that sketch, *One January Morning*, is, alone, enough to make the book indispensable—he writes of the ninety-five-year-old farmer in a pub, of captains on the lonely seas, of music hall performances, of a brown owl, of war books; he writes of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exploration, of the English sea-dog tradition (most ironically), of Trotsky on poets, of experiences in beauty and divination. *The Wreck, The Gift, The Changeling,* and *All in a Night* are short stories of a quality all too rare in a world of words.

The drawings by H. Charles Tomlinson introduce a new artist, and not just another illustrator; the drawings are thoroughly in keeping with the book; they are original in design and treatment, and are hauntingly beautiful in their subtle values. The Tomlinsons, father and son, have created a rare and noble book.

COLEY TAYLOR

IF, OR HISTORY REWRITTEN *edited by J. C. Squire* (VIKING. $3.00)

WHEN James Grover Thurber parodied the idea of a symposium of historical "ifs" in *The New Yorker*, he made it sound thoroughly inane. But the notion is far from foolish, for without a capacious sense of contingent "if" how could we ever pass judgment on any character or event of history? The sagacity of General Washington, to take an obvious example, is not really apparent until we imagine what a less tenacious man might have done in his stead. A historian with no sense of "if" would be totally unable to get any perspective on his material. The idea of this symposium, then, passes our muster. The book itself has a piquant taste, and is good fun. Nevertheless, only three of Mr. Squire's collaborators—Messrs. Ludwig, Waldman and Maurois—have risen completely to their opportunities; the rest, including Mr. Squire himself, are amusing and sometimes (as in Mr. Chesterton's case) poetic; yet they are, all of them, engaged either in satire that seems too far-fetched, or in fantasy that seems over elaborate. An old-fashioned New Englander, should he dip into certain of the "ifs", would unquestionably come out with a snort, "Hrrmph, wasting precious time".

Of course Mr. Chesterton would find a blithely paradoxical way of putting the New Englander in his place. Yet Friar Gilbert's own contribution would still be wasted on anyone who likes an argument to be clinching as well as glowing. Mr. Chesterton has seized the opportunity to write on his own consuming theme: that of Catholic England. His thesis is that "If Don John of Austria Had Married Mary Queen of Scots", England would have remained part of a sanctified organism larger than herself, and a "spiritual Channel Tunnel" would have linked her to France. But if R. H. Tawney is right, and the Catholic synthesis was doomed because it stood in the way of the rise of Capitalism—a Capitalism that was itself inevitable by Mary's time because of the disruption of the self-contained system of medieval Europe and the turning of men's minds to new continents and new goods—then the Chestertonian theme falls all apart: Cromwell, or someone very like him, would have risen on the shoulders of the middle sort of men in any case. The only possible conclusion is that Chesterton has not fixed on the apposite turning point of history for the rearing of his "if".

Like Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc chooses to plead for "the consummation of our common civilization"; this would have happened eventually if Drouet's cart had not stuck and Louis XVI had escaped. Hendrik van Loon joins with Chesterton and Belloc in offering a moral: "If the Dutch Had Kept Niew Amsterdam" the United States today would be overflowing with honey and good beer, and the Society for the Suppression of Vice would languish unheeded. And Winston Churchill is also there with his hidden pellet of propaganda—his specific for our ills being a union of the English-speaking world. This would have come into existence early in this century if the South had won the Civil War. Oddly enough, considering the sweep of his canvas, Mr. Churchill is completely logical in his working out of cause and effect.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The elastic stretches until it breaks in Harold Nicolson's "If Byron Had Become King of Greece", in Philip Guedalla's "If the Moors in Spain Had Won", and in H. A. L. Fisher's "If Napoleon Had Escaped to America". Mr. Squire's "If It Had Been Discovered in 1930 That Bacon Really Did Write Shakespeare" is something better. But Mr. Squire ignores the most fascinating speculation that pushes up from his theme: what would happen to our notions of integrity and character if it were proved that one man could have written the gnomic essays and the soaring plays? Of the three completely successful "Ifs" in the book, that of Milton Waldman will be of most interest to Americans. "If Booth Had Missed Lincoln", he argues, Abe would, even had he lived only a year longer, have found himself in Johnson's place, and impeachment proceedings would have resulted. Mr. Waldman is logical to the NTH degree. His thesis provokes one to think on the old story that a moral crusade usually ends by debauching the victor. Emil Ludwig, writing on "If the Emperor Frederick Had Not Had Cancer", returns with eloquence to the period and lessons of his good biographies. Finally, André Maurois ("If Louis XVI Had Had an Atom of Firmness") is successful for an extrinsic reason: he suggests to the reader a principle of historical indeterminancy. "The celestial historian", he remarks, ". . . soon discovers that the history of human societies, viewed over a fairly long period, is always more or less the same". This leaves room for the paradox of free individual choice within ineluctable historic contours, just as physical theory leaves space for indeterminancy among the electrons, yet ineluctable law regarding the behavior of large numbers of atoms. The parallel, while it admittedly proves nothing, is vastly suggestive, and it might have been urged on the attention of some of the more ebullient of Mr. Squire's collaborators.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FICTION

GIN AND BITTERS *by A. Riposte* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $2.50)

ALTHOUGH Mr. "A. Riposte" and his publishers rather discourage conjecture, I cannot help remarking that there was a novel published last year called *Cakes and Ale*, one of the most witty, malicious, and worthless novels that ever headed a best-selling list. *Gin and Bitters* lays some claim to being called a salty book, and it is perhaps a pity that, considered entirely on its own merits, so much of the salt should lose its savor. Its author, too, might have been less apparently pertinent in his choice of title and pseudonym; or in the fact that he has written about a novelist who wrote about other novelists, and whose plays were better than his novels, and who went to Tahiti, and so on. People like myself, who are not very well up in the private lives of the eminent, may well wonder what all the fuss is about; since it is one thing to flay Marsyas for having bad taste, but quite another to flay Maugham for having no taste at all. There, of course, conjecture raises its ugly head, for Mr. Riposte has expressly stated that there has been no fuss, and it would be suspicious and ill-mannered to disagree with him. We can, moreover, entirely agree with the jacket blurb which says that *Gin and Bitters* is no burlesque, for a burlesque is a sort of left-handed compliment, and cannot be enjoyed without some knowledge of its original, as *The Riddell Murder Case*, or the opening pages of *Amelia*, or the weighing scene from the *Frogs*, or any similar excursion ought to prove. *Gin and Bitters* disclaims an original, and in any case is a right-handed attack levelled against malice in general and not against malice in particular, for Mr. Riposte has rightly protested himself a hater of particularities. But if we take the purely general hypothesis that an eminent playwright once wrote a novel about a novelist which was a mixture of malice and fancy, almost unleavened with imagination; and if we go on to pretend that its asides were better than its direct speech, and its minor characters more delicately besmeared than its major ones; we might call that hypothetical novel a Novel at Second Hand. So far, I am sure, Mr. Riposte would be with us. Now *Gin and Bitters*, being "A Novel about a Novelist who writes Novels about other Novelists", is, to take the argument one step further, a Novel at Third Hand. Those readers therefore who honorably assume it to be quite original may find it a book of straw, and of straw swayed by malice, and by malice to no particular end. They may even catch themselves wondering why it is so bitter about nothing special, and what is the point it can never quite bring itself to make; or, if you like, catch themselves in a yawn. An honorable yawn.

It is about a novelist called Leverson Hurle, who is first discovered to us in the bed of his employer's wife. He had once, it appears, when a young and literary medico, lived with a lady of the lower classes called Lizzie Tailor, who not only cooked and mended for him, but was also his most valuable critic, because she said what she thought about his work in plain English, which is precisely the opposite of accepted criticism. When he was too poor to buy a microscope he needed, she sold herself to a stranger for ten pounds and bought it for him. Whereupon he left her in a fury. After this he seems to have become entirely absorbed in himself,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and to have used other people's characters and passions as so much "copy". He was not quite a gentleman, but "despite the fact of having been mistaken for an Italian waiter, there was really a sort of neat distinction about him". As he grew older his imagination withered, and his reportorial sense increased. As he grew more eminent he became increasingly jealous of other writers who, like Mr. Polahue, really seemed to know what Duchesses did in their spare time. He married his ex-employer's wife, because his ex-employer had divorced the lady and granted her a fat alimony, feeling that he had the better of the bargain. Later, on the same gentleman's benevolent advice, he took a protracted holiday from her, going to Tahiti and Singapore, where the lady joined him. . . . The rest of the story we may leave to those who will read it, with the assurance that it is really quite worth the pains.

There is this to add. It is surely a little odd that one of the minor characters in the book should be a blue-eyed novelist whose wife Hurle declared to have been a barmaid, and who went to Hurle's house because it was the one purely pretentious place he knew. And there is an even odder relationship between Mr. Alroy Kears of another novel and Mr. Polahue of *Gin and Bitters*. Surely the gentleman who, saving Mr. Riposte's presence, might have been the prototype of these two characters, never deserved such a vicious attack in the one book and such a mild and even more damning defense in the other. Such comparisons are out of order; otherwise I should dearly like to add that *Gin and Bitters* is a clever and unnecessary attack upon a far more clever and, morally speaking, far more unnecessary piece of literature. But Mr. Riposte will have none of it. Meanwhile let the wise read *Cakes and Ale*, if they have not done so already, and afterwards by all means *Gin and Bitters*. For conjecture, however idle, has its pleasures—mild and ineffectual no doubt. But pleasures.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

I SIT ALONE *by Waldemar Ager* (HARPERS. $2.50)

MR. RÖLVAAG'S masterly example is the evident stimulus for other Norwegian-Americans to seek a larger audience of English readers; but in following him they run the risk of unfortunate comparisons. *Giants in the Earth* is one of the great novels of our time, and is translated so magnificently as to be even admirable as English prose. *I Sit Alone* is a simple, unpretentious tale, with a style which in Mr. Charles Wharton Stork's translation, at least, becomes self-conscious and sentimental. To draw this comparison might seem unfair, since there is no indication that the author sought rivalry; but the novel is introduced by a dust-jacket commendation from Mr. Rölvaag and by the translator's quoted opinion that "a more genuine picture of an immigrant's life in modern America could hardly be imagined". Such advertising raises expectations which the novel by no means satisfies. Much of interest concerning Norwegian immigrants does indeed transpire by the way; but the novel is primarily not a study of a social group but the simple little story of a sensitive soul—quiet "Sabbath reading" for readers with unsophisticated sensibilities.

The setting, which suggested the title, is a one-room shack on the Dakota prairie in winter, in which the narrator, Christian Pedersen, in fact "sits alone" and for pastime sets down the story of his life. Beginning in Norway, this story traverses a typical immigrant's experiences in Chicago and Wisconsin, and reaches its real theme in a commonplace unsuccessful marriage. Christian, a rather soft and thin-skinned hero, has finally retreated to this melancholy hole to permit his selfish wife to divorce him. The emotional element of the tale comes with his recollection of past joys and sorrows—chiefly the latter. We cannot, however, become much aroused by them, for everything is seen vaguely at second hand through Christian's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simple mind, and impatience at his weakness often gains the ascendency over sympathy for his misfortunes. His wife does at one time excite interest as a character, when it is discovered that she has a copious supply of tears, as it were on tap, and can set them flowing at will and just for fun. She amuses herself playing this trick before the neighbors, who infer the worst against her innocent husband. His business and reputation ruined and his home broken up through her conduct, Christian now meditates in his shack on the harm that women can do their husbands. In this the logic reminds us slightly of Strindberg, but the mood is one of sorrow rather than anger. His troubles lead Christian also to considerable meditation on the ethical inspiration of Christianity as taught by a saint-like minister of the Dakota town. Unlike most Scandinavian novels this one ends happily, with the probability that the hero will finally be united to his first love.

A good example of Mr. Ager's style is his picture of the unhappy husband: "All around are people who point their finger at such a husband. 'Look at him! He's not getting anywhere.' Inferior men with better support and understanding in their homes are sailing beyond him in all directions. His gait becomes slouchy, his spirit is gone, his ears droop, energetic and resolute folk laugh at him, and the expression of his eyes becomes that of a dog—a dog that pleads.

"His mother would have understood him. . . . 'I'm calling to you, Mother!' "

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

TWO THIEVES *by Manuel Komroff* (COWARD-MCCANN. $2.50)

THE heroes of this romance are the two thieves whom Pilate is said, by Scripture, to have crucified along with Christ. According to Komroff's version, however, they were not ruffians but clever fellows with good intentions. One an Arab, the other a Jew, they are united in their hatred of Pilate and the effects of Roman rule in Palestine. Both have suffered from that tyranny and, combining the brawn of one with the brains of the other, they scheme to upset the government. But the means which they use to accomplish a given end appear sometimes rather unnecessarily complicated. To get gold, for instance, they rob the tomb of Herod; and in order to secure the signature of Pilate—which they intend to convert to their own use—they steal three ladies from Ben Rashid's seraglio, present them to Pilate as the gift of Ben Rashid, and receive from Pilate a signed and sealed receipt.

It is perhaps because they are too ingenious that their revolt fails, and they find themselves presently upon Calvary, in noble company, and under an effect of lighting which even the Theater Guild could not surpass. Komroff's tendency towards theatrical display, which is held pretty well in check throughout the greater part of the book, bursts with violence upon the reader in this last chapter. Though swiftly and simply told, with effective and restrained strokes of historical color, *Two Thieves* is, none the less, of the old order of romance, and better than *Ben Hur* only because it is not so long. There is, if not a chariot race, a chariot pursuit, and the characters say, "We have no time to lose", and "The victory is ours".

FREDERICK DUPEE

A MAN'S LIFE (AMOUR NUPTIAL) *by Jacques de Lacretelle* (HOLT. $2.00)

THAT Jacques de Lacretelle is one of the most distinguished of the present middle generation of French writers one would hardly suspect from a reading of *Amour Nuptial*. His earlier novels and stories revealed a profound interest in spiritual problems, a gift of analysis similar to that of Larbaud, and a highly developed sense of the subtleties of the narrator's art. What he seeks primarily is the creation, through suggestion, of the most secret soul (*l'âme cachée*) of his characters,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But in the last year he has produced two novels which beside *Silbermann* or *La Bonifas* appear as rather unsuccessful experiments.

As its title indicates, Lacretelle's latest work presents a study of the strained emotional relations between a young French couple during their early years of married life. A smugly, almost prudishly, virtuous wife, by making her every action an example of unalloyed goodness, produces a counter-reaction in her sensitive and otherwise normal husband. First as a novelist he finds his interest turning gradually toward vicious characters, and finally his own life is affected until he periodically allows his lowest instincts to dominate him for the sheer pleasure of wallowing in vice. While still loving his wife, he is deliberately unfaithful to her merely to escape her partly unconscious moral bullying of him. Sensing their estrangement, she suffers acutely; and when she learns how she has lost his love, the shock kills her.

The barest analysis of this novel's plot cannot fail to recall *The Immoralist*, where Gide handles very much the same delicate situation with the same *dénouement*. Lacretelle is, however, much more conscientious in the development of his theme and in his effort to describe precisely the stages in this emotional crisis. Writing with a restraint almost equal to Gide's, he has nevertheless made the situation seem real and at the same time given body to his protagonists as Gide never has. Where Lacretelle fails in *Amour Nuptial* is precisely in that quality which his first works show him to have possessed instinctively and which most novelists have to struggle to acquire—the art of composing the elements of a novel into a harmonious whole. For here we find two equally important themes running parallel to each other and sometimes becoming confused in the author's mind: the theme of one person's reaction away from a moral example that is set before him for his emulation, and the theme dealing with the great abyss which lies between emotional and physical love. With his analytical technique, Lacretelle could still make a great novel out of the relations between two people who were physically but not emotionally attuned to each other, or vice versa; but as this element is introduced here it merely adds confusion to what seems to be the main issue. Another kind of confusion arises from the autobiographical aspect of this novel and the fact that by making his protagonist a novelist the author has too often been led to discourse on the art of writing and the composition of his own earlier works. While all these reflections are valuable to the critic, they had much better been collected separately, as Gide's were in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*.

TOWARDS THE WEST *by Maurice Constantin-Weyer* (MACAULAY. $2.00)

THE best that can be said for Constantin-Weyer's novels is that they are just the thing for those who like that sort of thing. Until his first work, *A Man Scans His Past*, received the *Prix Goncourt* in 1928, the French had known the "great Northwest" only in translations from the English; that is why this retired rancher and fur-trapper caused a sensation in Paris: he revived the Jack London manner and stamped it with the mark of a national product. He became a best-seller overnight and ceased to be discussed in literary circles.

Towards the West is his second novel to be laid in a historical setting, for like *The Half-Breed* it goes back to the time of Riel's rebellion and the wars with the Sioux. But Riel himself is not the hero of this latest book, which deals primarily with the love of Jeremy, another half-breed, and Flora Lesperance. After their engagement and Jeremy's departure on a surveying expedition, the villain appears in the person of a Scotch half-breed, to seduce the beautiful and innocent Flora and make a village scandal of her. On the hero's return, he upsets the Northland's code of ethics by reasserting his intention to marry her, and during one of Riel's punitive

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raids on the Sioux the villain is killed by the Indians and thus escapes Jeremy's revenge. The novel ends with a picture of Riel and his happy young subjects playing with the villain's love-child whom Jeremy has accepted as his own. All the elements of the good old-fashioned thriller are to be found here: the love of pure-hearted half-savages, the Indian wars, the long trek across wastes of snow to bring the white man's frozen body back to civilization, the villain's lust and the hero's wrath, even the incantations of the sorceress and the hard life of the early missionaries. The characters are as colorless and ill-defined as in those old movies which used to feature the Canadian Mounted Police, and, also as in the movies of yore, the translation is so bad that credit for it has been given to no one.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

THE GOOD EARTH *by Pearl S. Buck* (JOHN DAY. $2.50)

IF the purpose of the novel is to affect the emotions by revealing human life, then *The Good Earth* may be called great. To read this story of Wang Lung, Chinese farmer, is to be slowly and deeply purified; and when the last page is finished it is as if some significant part of one's own days were over. Though I may never see a rice-field, I shall always feel that I have lived for a long time in China. The strange power of a western woman to make an alien civilization seem as casual, as close, as the happenings of the morning is surprising; but it is less amazing than her power to illuminate the destiny of man as it is in all countries and at all times by quietly telling the story of one poor Wang Lung. It is true that religion, clothing, tradition, food and even the skies themselves are different from the things we know; and yet these differences are of no consequence. After the first sentence of the book, "It was Wang Lung's marriage day", one is hardly aware of any strangeness, for the persuasiveness of experience is in this prose which moves so surely. There is full detail, the very feeling and taste of life, and, finally, the pattern is clear with the force of the inevitable.

Born humble, born to starvation, Wang Lung was the only one of a score or more children to grow to manhood; indeed it was thought only natural that his mother should have many sons and daughters in order that one might live. Wang Lung lived with his father in a small earthen house and when he looked at their fields he thought what it would be to have a woman to share his good earth. It was promised that his father would ask for a slave from the great House of Hwang to be his wife. But Wang Lung was rebellious when he was told that she would be "Not a slave too young, and above all, not a pretty one". Still it was agreed that she would not have a split upper lip nor would she be pock-marked. When Wang Lung received his bride, the slave O-lan, from the Ancient Mistress who sat on a daïs in the hall of the great house, he looked at her eagerly and he saw "that it was true there was not beauty of any kind in her face—a brown, common, patient face". And her feet were large—unbound. Nevertheless, "in her ears he saw his rings hanging, the gold-washed rings he had bought, and on her hands were the rings he had given her. He turned away with secret exultation. Well, he had his woman!"

O-lan and Wang Lung walked out of the House of Hwang through the village and across the fields towards the house of his father and his grandfather. They spoke few words and once they stopped to burn incense before the two placid gods in the wayside temple to the earth. That was the moment of their marriage; forever afterwards they served the earth to bring forth its harvests. Silent and alone O-lan bore the first son and after that she would stop in the field to feed him richly. The crops flourished and there was a second son; it was as if a sign of prosperity were over his door and one day Wang Lung went to the great House

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Hwang to buy a piece of land. It was said that the Old Mistress needed more and more money for her opium, her careless sons, and the maiden-loving Old Lord. The purchase was the turning-point of his life. From that time Wang Lung had a great need to labor and produce that he might still more strengthen his holdings; he thought of the abundance of the good earth and he was happy.

But the gods did not continue kind. The sun parched the land and there was no rain. A third child, a daughter, was born; and the store of food was slowly, slowly disappearing. It did not matter that Wang Lung was the most thrifty farmer in the countryside for he, too, had at last only a few beans left. Another child was born and when O-lan called Wang Lung to her room it was dead with two red marks on its neck. But the land was not sold; the furniture brought enough to carry the family and the old father to the south, where they begged in the streets while Wang Lung pulled a jinriksha. The life of the city was strange and all about was talk of war and revolution. Wang Lung thought of his fields and heard that the poor would be revenged on the rich; one day he asked a young man who spoke vehemently in the streets, "Sir, is there any way whereby the rich who oppress us can make it rain so that I can work on the land?" But the revolution struck and even the House of Hwang was plundered. Wang Lung returned to his home only vaguely apprehending the ferment. He was thrifty, he labored, and O-lan gave him a bag of jewels from a rich house in the city. Two more children were born and such great plenty came to Wang Lung that he bought more and more land from the heirs to the House of Hwang. His sons went to school. There was plenty but there was no peace, for with idleness he saw that O-lan was not desirable and he went to the town where he found Lotus, a petulant flower. He brought her to his house after the custom of wealthy men and he grieved that he wounded O-lan whom he could not love. His sons think nothing of the land and they prevail upon him to buy the great building and courts of the House of Hwang. He is old and he is moved to own the hall where the Ancient Mistress gave him O-lan. There he lives surrounded by his sons, his daughters, his family, and the children born to his sons. O-lan and his father are dead; Lotus is fat and there is quarreling in the lofty rooms. But tablets have been placed for all to see; tablets to the ancestors of the House of Wang Lung. One day Wang Lung hears his sons talking of the sale of his land and they smile over his head when he exclaims, "It is the end of a family—when they begin to sell the land. Out of the land we came and into it we must go—and if you will hold your land you can live—no one can rob you of the land".

NANCY EVANS

THE SQUIRE'S DAUGHTER *by F. M. Mayor* (COWARD-MCCANN. $2.50)

MISS MAYOR has been encouraged rather than dazzled by the praise her first novel received, and the result is an excellent second book. It is a story of two generations in an English country family, quietly and effectively told. Veronica De Lacey, the young daughter of Sir Geoffrey, and her brother Oswald, a "slacker", are unable to live as their parents did, and the clash between youth and age, with the death of Sir Geoffrey, the loss of Carne, the family home for generations, and Oswald's disgrace, makes a drama of sorrow and hard-hearted youthful neglect which becomes gradually more touching. Veronica, "Ron", makes trouble wherever she goes, and falls just short of ruining the lives of Lettice Merstham, the quiet, unpretentious daughter of Sir Edward Merstham, and Robert Manners, the solid, conservative, likeable clergyman. Ron's sister Colette marries a rich American and gives the author a chance for satire. It is good satire, if somewhat rougher than the rest, which is gentle and tolerant.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ron ends up by marrying her cousin Rex, to the surprise of everyone, including herself. The masterful Aunt Laura, the silly mother, and the old servants stand out, and there are clear pictures of the clergy, the villagers, and the riotous young Londoners. The scene is warmly and richly presented, and there is humor and genuine depth of feeling to round out this even-textured, satisfying novel. It deserves a large circle of readers.

ROBERT MOLLOY

POOR CAROLINE *by Winifred Holtby* (MCBRIDE. $2.50)

THIS is a good book; so good, in fact, as to be difficult to review adequately. The actual action of the story takes place between August, 1928, and April, 1929, and covers the brief existence of one of the many enthusiasms of Caroline Denton-Smith, the Christian Cinema Company.

The book opens with an account of Caroline's funeral and we see her first as an eccentric, impoverished old woman, decidedly odd and for many years a source of annoyance to her relations, through the eyes of two young cousins who have combined with the unpleasant duty of attending the services a highly successful shopping expedition to London.

Each of the succeeding chapters concerns itself with one of the members of the board of the Christian Cinema Company. There is Basil Reginald Anthony St. Denis, who acts as the company's promoter to escape boredom; there is Joseph Isenbaum, a wealthy Jew, who sees in it a chance to get a proper introduction to Eton for his beloved son; Eleanor de la Roux, a distant relative of Caroline's, who in an impulsive moment invests her inheritance in the company, finding relief from her grief over her father's death and her isolation in thus restoring Caroline's faith in miracles.

There is Hugh Angus Macafee, a genius who has invented a process of film-synchronizing and has no room in his mind for anything that does not further his scientific discoveries; Roger Aintree Mortimer, an idealistic young clergyman quite unintentionally involved, first through his pity for Caroline and later through his love for Eleanor; Clifton Roderick Johnson, a poseur and crook and one-time movie actor in Hollywood, and last of all Caroline herself. It is she, with her preposterous schemes and enthusiasms, who binds together the various and utterly dissimilar characters and by her very absurdities influences their lives and gives them all the thing they have been seeking.

She is a visionary; ridiculous, impractical, living almost in squalor, often going hungry and always wearing an incongruous costume of cast-off clothes adorned and embellished with feathers, beads, bows and gew gaws; carrying a bag stuffed to overflowing with the papers and correspondence of her various hobbies, busily fluttering from place to place and enthusiasm to enthusiasm, referred to half-pityingly and half-contemptuously as "poor Caroline". Undoubtedly she is a little "cracked". Yet, somehow, under the understanding and sympathetic pen of Miss Holtby, she emerges from the pages of the book a figure of amazing courage and faith. As she lies dying in the charity ward of a hospital, stripped of everything reckoned by worldly standards, she is still able to pronounce her own valedictory: "When you come to think of it, Eleanor, I've had a very remarkable life".

The book would be worth reading if only for the character drawing of each of the people concerned. The love story of Eleanor and Roger is beautiful in its simplicity. But the thing which makes the book both absorbing and unique is the clarity with which Miss Holtby proves the truth of the words of the young clergyman: "We are all so oddly interrelated. We are members of one another—an inescapable communion. We cannot avoid incurring responsibility for our brethren".

By all means read *Poor Caroline.*

MILDRED SEITZ

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THREE PAIRS OF SILK STOCKINGS *by Panteleimon Romanof* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.50)

STRANGELY enough, very little fiction worthy of serious attention has as yet come out of Soviet Russia. To say, therefore, that Mr. Romanof's novel about the life of the educated class under the Communist régime is the best we have had so far, smacks of the nature of a left-handed compliment.

In many respects *Three Pairs of Silk Stockings* is a remarkably good piece of work. Comrade Romanof has succeeded in portraying contemporary life in Russia with admirable detachment and with a freedom from propagandist tendencies that is little short of miraculous. The novel has three main currents of interest: the career and personality of Hyppolit Kisliakof, a member of the professional class; Tamara, the young wife of his best friend, who with her self-centered individualism and loose moral codes is identified with the younger Soviet generation; and the actual social, economic, and cultural background and interests of the people living in Moscow under present conditions. The whole strength of the book lies in this latter aspect of it. Kisliakof and Tamara, however one may be inclined to sympathize with them or despise them, come to life only when we see them against the living fabric of their environment. Mr. Romanof's real genius lies in his observation of life in cross-section: he lifts the superficial epidermis and reveals the raw flesh, even the network of veins, glands and viscera beneath. It is not altogether a pretty sight. His untouched photograph of a crowded nine-room house, in each room of which lives one family or more, all sharing one communal bath and kitchen—the whole overrun with children, dogs and vermin—is bad enough. But the irritating effect which it has upon the fastidious, hen-pecked and harassed professor, Kisliakof, cooped up with his shrew of a wife and her ghoulish aunt, makes one itch with the desire to escape it all. The sudden sweeping away of income, leisure, and privacy has, it would seem, very soon made bickering and frustrated bourgeois of the educated class. And yet, if Tamara—whose body can be purchased for three pairs of silk stockings—and Comrade Polukin (the new museum director in the story) who becomes a mechanized robot for the privilege of wearing a blue shirt, emblem of the worker—if these represent the modern proletariat, God help Russia! Perhaps Mr. Romanof intends us to look upon all these people as helpless victims, or necessary sacrifices upon the altar of a tremendous cataclysm from which beauty and order must eventually evolve.

Apart from all this, however, the novel presents a knotty little mystery for the reader to solve: did Tamara commit suicide? Or was she murdered by her ex-lover, Kisliakof, who had, indeed, just motive?

FOR A SONG *by Konrad Bercovici* (DODD, MEAD. $2.50)

THIS novel has all the paraphernalia of metropolitan Grand Opera superimposed upon a modernistic American symphonic structure that embraces junk-peddlers and millionaires, usurers and quack art dealers, bootleggers and impresarios. Dominant as a theme rising above its dependent variations, one vivid character emerges with the reality of garlic, fried smelts, sweat and Rabelaisian humor: Alberto Russo, the golden-voiced tenor, king of grand opera, idol of the East Side.

The story is concerned primarily, however, with the preparation of Russo's Mulberry Street prodigy, young Maria Caponi, for a singer's career—a girl whose ambition is fed not by love, but by a hatred, amounting to the fierceness of a vendetta, of her shrewish mother, who ruined her father's life. But one is not, for some reason, greatly interested in Maria. Other characters are more convincing and, thank heaven, more amusing: the Jewish-Irish combination, Weinstein and Connolly; Marcus, an amazing charlatan who makes millions from nothing, and buys his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

daughter Rebecca an operatic career; the young American composer, Charles Law, who loves Maria. But always one turns with special delight whenever the jovial Russo reappears upon the stage.

Konrad Bercovici's own musical interests and acquaintance with the great personages of the musical world have furnished him, undoubtedly, with the wealth of material in this novel. But a sloppy, undisciplined style affords poor covering at best to carelessly loose construction; and no self-respecting musician would mix the slapstick with the sentimental, the tawdry with the magnificent, in the way that Bercovici so lavishly mixes them. Certainly no one lacking his Bohemian gusto would dare to. Mr. Bercovici's talents, it would seem, are employed to much better advantage in his descriptive tales and short stories—particularly in those that center about the lives and loves of his own Roumanian gypsies.

RUTH LECHLITNER

RENÉE, LA VAGABONDE *by Colette* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

IN *Renée*, the extraordinary Colette tells the story of an *artiste* of the music halls, a woman who, like Colette herself, can write novels as well as dance and act. The background of the theatre and music hall with their actors, acrobats, singers, dancers, comedians, both in Paris and on tour, supplies the setting for the main theme. And in all her books Colette follows Anatole France's one rule for novels —"Let them be short and let them speak of love". Colette is rare because she is wholly the woman artist. Her art is thoroughly indigenous to her sex, without imitation, in its psychological undercurrents, of men writers. Whatever she does is done this side perfection because she does not attempt to do more than she can perfect.

Renée is superior in mind and in spirit to most of Colette's heroines. Her marriage to a fashionable artist had been unhappy. She had divorced him after much suffering and then turned to writing stories and afterwards to the stage to make her living. She lives alone and austerely. When a rich young man from the provinces falls in love with her she does all that she can to avoid, escape, and discourage him. For weeks he pursues her. Such faithfulness must eventually have some effect and at last he succeeds in becoming her friend. He asks her to marry him. Renée vacillates in choosing between the tyranny of married love after her first bitter experience and her new freedom, the satisfaction of earning her own money and being her own mistress, for all the hardships and loneliness. There is no point in making comparisons. *Renée* maintains the standard which *Chéri*, *Mitsou*, *The Gentle Libertine* and others established.

THE NIGHT LIFE OF THE GODS *by Thorne Smith* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

THIS book is a kind of fairy story—but distinctly for grown-ups only. The hero, the giant killer, the prince, and the good magician are all represented in the person of Hunter Hawk, an eccentric young scientist who, after blowing himself up to the rafters in his home, effects the great discovery of a ray which brings about "complete cellular petrification through atomic disintegration". He is thus able to turn people into statues. Fortunately, he is able also to bring them to life again.

Then he meets Meg, who is one of the little people that came here from Ireland long before Columbus. She is younger than most, being only nine hundred years old and a beauty as well as a witch. She knows the magic of changing statues into the living beings they represent. The complications which follow the travels of these two incorrigible jokesmiths may well be imagined.

Meg is, of course, a born pagan; but Hawk is no Puritan. After many picaresque adventures, these two find themselves in New

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

York, and, selecting the better sports among the gods represented in the museum, bring their images to life. The gods are pagans, too, and Mr. Smith contrives all sorts of entertainment for them.

Part farce, part comedy, part satire, reminiscent of the *Wizard of Oz* as well as of more mature humor, the book becomes wearisome before it is finished. There is a dog named Blotto. And some of it is very funny.

FRED T. MARSH

BIG TOWN *by Philip McKee* (JOHN DAY. $3.00)

THIS is a pointedly satiric analysis of Gem City, a typical big town in the mid-west with all the faults and frenzies characteristic of a rural community reaching greedily for the laurels of urban ranking. The flavor of Mr. McKee's treatise may be tasted in the preface by Sherwood Anderson wherein that veteran editor once more demonstrates his ability to render the obvious obscure through a generous use of staccato sentences—a method which happily the author does not employ.

Gem City is first seen as a straggling hamlet and, after a hasty treatment of its early growing pains, the author shows us the town as it is today, making dramatic use of occasional flash-backs to justify his tart conclusions. The years transform the pioneer village into a bragging metropolis, a far cry from the day when a five-minute walk in any direction from the Public Square brought one to open and fertile fields. The chapter headings are eloquent guides to the author's viewpoint. Our business barons are aptly pilloried as High Priests of Prosperity; our revival meetings are held in Glory Barns; the backslapping sanctity of the Y.M.C.A. is neatly underscored in the caption Temple of Fellowship; and our social careerists are unmasked. The net result is entertaining, punitive and ironic. But Philip McKee is not the first to say, scratch a city and you find a big town.

WILLIAM J. FADIMAN

THE SECRET IMAGE *by Laurence Oliver* (SIMON & SCHUSTER. $2.00)

THIS striking, quiet-toned novel opens with the rescue of a strange and scandalous woman, no longer young, from a fire which has destroyed all her possessions and shocked her into temporary forgetfulness of the past. Skilfully the author sketches in the characters with whom she is thrown in contact, and traces sympathetically through their unsympathetic eyes what that harsh past had been. Charlotte Blair, long years before, thought the world well lost for a dashing young fellow who promised much as a writer. Slowly she saw that the promise was empty, that her lover was crafty, heartless, greedy and at last not only inimical to her very safety but—this she could not bear—a base brute.

So many dangers of falling into the pathetic, the sweetly romantic, were here and Mr. Oliver has so beautifully avoided them, telling his story with serenity and truth to human nature, that it must be called a remarkable as well as a likable book.

IRIS BARRY

NO SURRENDER *by Jo van Ammers-Küller* (DUTTON. $2.50)

JOYCE CORNVELT, of the same Cornvelt family that figured in *The Rebel Generation*, is an orphan living upon the charity of her English cousins. As the guiding principle of her life, she remembers the words of her mother, dying in a concentration camp in South Africa. "The women have the worst of it in this life, Joyce. Will you do your best when the time comes to fight against the injustice done to women in the world?" Timid, sensitive, idealistic Joyce, opposing both her Dutch and English relatives, and Tom Cornfelt, her conservative and arrogant suitor, allies herself with the cause of the militant suffragettes. She takes part in some of their more violent demonstrations, goes to prison for the cause, and dies during an outbreak of mob fury.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This description of a modern martyrdom has, for some reason, a spurious ring. Jo van Ammers-Küller evidently regards the woman suffrage movement in England as a direct result of the campaign conducted by a few heroic women who showed themselves quite ready to spend their lives in order to obtain the franchise, rather than as an inevitable consequence of the changing economic structure of society. Her novel is highly sentimentalized, with Joyce presented as the lily-white heroine, and Tom, the brutal male, painted villainously black. While it is too literally historical to be very satisfactory as fiction, it is certainly too narrow in its point of view to be justifiable as history.

Without doubt there is magnificent material for the novelist in the woman suffrage movement from 1904 to 1914. A few scenes from the present novel are sufficient to convince the reader of that. The book achieves a high pitch of dramatic suspense in the dash through the cordons of mounted police to lay a suffrage petition before the House of Commons, and in the concluding episodes of mob violence and mob hysteria.

MARGARET WALLACE

THE JESTING ARMY *by Ernest Raymond* (APPLETON. $3.00)

BRITISH war novels run true to type. Young Tony O'Grogan, fair haired with a clean skin, a product of the public schools, goes to the Dardanelles. The book is, in attitude, very like *Journey's End*. These delightful childlike men with their ideals and principles are, as has been pointed out so many times, typical of something that does exist. They are the exaggerated ideal of an educational and social theory. Once you grant that, the book is splendid. The characters talk so brilliantly; they are so kindly and sensitive; they are so beautifully sure that there is some ennobling meaning behind it all. Even if this book and all its prototypes are fantasy and, in their way, very pernicious and unwholesome since they cover a nasty wound, yet the joviality of our own product and the grim despondency of the German variety drive us to them. Nowhere have we seen a real description of the war; no author has given a rational excuse nor a remedy. So, since we cannot cope with reality, let us be gallant about it. For this book is so well written, with so keen an appreciation of the possibilities of English prose, that it is a joy to read it.

PAUL ALLEN

THERE WILL BE FIGHTING *by Peadar O'Donnell* (PUTNAM. $2.50)

You can almost smell the gunpowder in this book as you read, it has so strong an atmosphere of violence and murder. A story of the Irish Rebellion of 1921, the author tells of the conflict between Orangemen and Republicans in "the Lagan", a small rural district in Ireland. The Godfrey Dhu family buys a homestead in the Lagan, which has always by tacit agreement limited ownership of land to Orangemen. Thus begins a conflict which, after many a fight, hairbreadth escape and betrayal, ends with the rescue of "The Knife" and the Doctor as they are being led out of prison, supposedly to their execution.

It is a little difficult for one unfamiliar with Irish affairs to follow and perhaps fully appreciate this story, which has many local allusions. The author assumes familiarity with the events of 1921—at least, he does not explain the actions of his characters, and, especially, he does not trouble to give the grounds for their powerful feelings. He takes it for granted, apparently, that one was either an Orangeman or a Republican in 1921—it does not make much difference which, so long as the reader was one or the other. For the author treats both sides pretty well, dividing his "good" characters between them and remaining fairly impartial.

In fact, it is not always clear at exactly what the author did aim in this book, if indeed he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aimed at more than a sort of super-mystery-story. His book wavers between the *genre* novel, the historical romance and the out-and-out bloody thriller. It contains excellent *genre* sketches of the older peasants, chronicles of events that read like history, and numerous raids, breathless intrigues and escapes that would do credit to a Nick Carter. At times the characters are puppets, at others masks of spite and hatred. Nuala Godfrey Dhu, the girl for whom most of the fighting is done, is the most consistent of the lot—a character in whom rebellion is itself a principle.

CLINTON SIMPSON

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON *by Louis Wallis* (MACMILLAN. $2.00)

THE jacket of Mr. Louis Wallis's book displays quotations from several clergymen who state that they have found it interesting. I must admit, however, that to my unclerical mind it seems exceedingly dull. Under a very thin coating of commonplace fiction, it contains numerous dissertations on biblical history, and many lengthy expositions of the manner of collecting and copying the ancient rolls, which were eventually, it would seem, to compose what we know as the Old Testament. Written in as close an approximation of biblical language as the author has been able to achieve, the book tells a story of the days of king Zedikiah, closing with the burning of Jerusalem by the forces of the Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar.

The slender plot has to do with a "fair maiden" named Miriam, whose father Simeon had borrowed money from the wealthy Ahikam, giving one of his best fields as security. Eliezer, Ahikam's steward, insisted that the debt must be paid, but Ahikam's son, the virtuous Nathan, befriended Simeon, and of course fell in love with the beautiful Miriam. There is a great deal about oppressing the poor and needy, and about Jehovah as the only god who was "for hesed and justice". The author, it would seem, has never read the so-called Negative Confession of *The Book of the Dead*. Considered as fiction, the book shows neither feeling for characterization nor any sense of drama.

GOODBYE AND TOMORROW *by Leane Zugsmith* (LIVERIGHT. $2.00)

THAT especial kind of youthful naïveté which exaggerates character and underscores ideas, while striving to assume a guise of ultra-sophistication is very evident in Leane Zugsmith's novel. But there is a character to exaggerate, and there are ideas to underscore, wherein the book differs from many otherwise its prototypes.

The twenty-four hour convention, so popular a couple of years ago, with its many flash-backs and the frequent reminiscences which prove the heroine possessed of a remarkable memory, is used to unfold the character and history of Emmy Bishop, a lady of charm, wealth and lovers innumerable. The more important of these were all artists of one kind or another, through whose gifts Emmy sought compensation for her own lack of talent. Each new favorite she fancied must be the long-sought genius; she dramatized her affair with every new lover as she dramatized herself and the position she imagined she held, deceiving herself more successfully than she did anyone else. To portray so complex a character accurately requires more skill than the author as yet possesses, and the novel is a good deal over-written. It shows, however, more than a little promise.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

If you don't believe that the movies have something to do with the reading of books, take a look at "Cimarron". For months it has been appearing in the Monthly Score, starting up toward the top, as an Edna Ferber book is in the habit of doing, and gradually slipping until by February it was down to last place. But —the "talkie" picture of "Cimarron" was released toward the end of January. It is a good picture and several million people have seen it and liked it. And the reaction of a goodly percentage of them has been to rush to the nearest public library and ask for a copy of the book. Result: "Cimarron" jumps back to fifth place in the Monthly Score. F. P. S.

NOVELS

1. THE DEEPENING STREAM	*Dorothy Canfield*	HARCOURT, BRACE
2. ANGEL PAVEMENT	*J. B. Priestley*	HARPERS
3. CAKES AND ALE	*W. Somerset Maugham*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
4. PHILIPPA	*Anne Douglas Sedgwick*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
5. CIMARRON	*Edna Ferber*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
6. IMPERIAL PALACE	*Arnold Bennett*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
7. YEARS OF GRACE	*Margaret Ayer Barnes*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
8. SEED	*Charles G. Norris*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
9. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS	*Louis Bromfield*	STOKES
10. BACK STREET*	*Fannie Hurst*	COSMOPOLITAN
11. GRAND HOTEL*	*Vicki Baum*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
12. SUNSET PASS*	*Zane Grey*	HARPERS

GENERAL

1. THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE	*Axel Munthe*	DUTTON
2. EDUCATION OF A PRINCESS	*Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia*	VIKING
3. LITTLE AMERICA	*Richard E. Byrd*	PUTNAM
4. THE GREEN PASTURES	*Marc Connelly*	FARRAR & RINEHART
5. HUMANITY UPROOTED	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
6. THE LIVES OF A BENGAL LANCER	*Major F. Yeats-Brown*	VIKING
7. THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE	*Sir James Jeans*	MACMILLAN
8. INDIA: LAND OF THE BLACK PAGODA	*Lowell Thomas*	CENTURY
9. THE CONQUEST OF HAPPINESS	*Bertrand Russell*	LIVERIGHT
10. ASTROLOGY: YOUR PLACE AMONG THE STARS	*Evangeline Adams*	DODD, MEAD
11. THE HUMAN MIND	*Karl Menninger*	KNOPF
12. THE MARKS OF AN EDUCATED MAN	*Albert Edward Wiggam*	BOBBS-MERRILL

* *This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABOUT BOOK-COLLECTING

by Wilfred Partington

End-Papers and Marginalia

London, April.

I AM devoting most of this month's Department to the inner history of a recent and remarkable episode in the collecting world. I do so not only because it is in itself illuminating, but in the hope of saving some collector several thousands of dollars and (worse still) a disappointment particularly unpleasant.

On November 11th last there came up at Sotheby's an item which was catalogued as follows:—

> Brontë (Charlotte) A fine Auto. Manuscript "Reminiscences of Early Days affectionately presented to (name erased) by an Old Friend and Schoolfellow", 18pp. 8vo., this important manuscript was addressed to the Revd. W. Carus-Wilson, who founded the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton, where Charlotte Brontë was educated; this is a retraction of much that she wrote in Jane Eyre concerning the Casterton School.
>
> *** An important Manuscript and believed to be entirely unpublished.

This description is hardly in accordance with the best standards of Sotheby cataloguing, for one would have expected more details—but that is by the way. However, the item was given the honor of a Frontispiece reproduction of a page of the MS. It was, indeed, being almost modest to describe this as merely an "important manuscript". The consumption that so cruelly swept into their early graves the devoted sisters of the Haworth rectory, and extinguished, as the snuffer of a candle, the brilliant genius of Charlotte Brontë, was undoubtedly the result of the terrible conditions of and the treatment received at Casterton School—that institution for the gentle daughters of poor clergymen. This document, on the other hand, exposed as a fiction the vivid scenes of Lowood in *Jane Eyre* which we had always accepted as true pictures of Casterton. What was worse, it involved the integrity of Charlotte Brontë, since it gave the lie to the story as told by her biographer Mrs. Gaskell. There was a great outcry when the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* first appeared in 1857, with its further light on the miseries endured at the school. Amid much criticism, pressure was brought to bear on Mrs. Gaskell with a view to suppressing her version, or—at least—moderating her references.

The circumstances that the experiences of the Brontës occurred during the first two years of the school's establishment, and that strong testimony was brought forward to the worthy character of the Reverend Carus-Wilson, whose sense of human kindness seems to have developed with the school, did, in fact, induce Mrs. Gaskell to make in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second edition of the *Life* (same year) the best she conscientiously could of the case for the founder. But in the main she stuck to her guns; and not all the threats of legal injunctions and claims for damages could persuade her to alter the grim story as told to her by Charlotte and other informants who "solemnly repeated" their evidence when called upon. Charlotte more than once said to Mrs. Gaskell that she would not have written what she did of Lowood in *Jane Eyre* if she had thought the place would have been so immediately identified with Cowan Bridge [i.e., the school], although *"there was not a word in her account of the institution but what was true at the time when she knew it"*. Thus the *Life*. And now, here, in this document at Sotheby's, was Miss Brontë practically retracting all that she had written and said, in a lengthy document which had been hidden from the world (although the cataloguer is silent on this point) until 1930. It was not surprising that when this manuscript came to be known through the circulation of the catalogue, prior to the sale, that the English Press gave considerable prominence to its amazing contents. Here was a literary sensation; and it was widely anticipated that there would be keen competition for a document which necessitated some re-estimation of Charlotte Brontë; and certainly the rewriting of one of the most poignant chapters of her memorable *Life*. The general opinion was that this manuscript would realize anything from $1,000 to $5,000.

It sold for the contemptible sum of $25—this revealing document of the very highest importance; an author's self-confession such as had not appeared for many years. *Why?*

What happened I am able to state for the first time. Such a manuscript naturally attracted the attention of Mr. T. J. Wise, of Ashley Library fame. It was submitted to him for inspection; and he—than whom there is no better authority—unhesitatingly pronounced the handwriting as not being that of Charlotte Brontë. He went further; and made representations that the owner should be strongly urged either to destroy it, or to deposit it with the British Museum. The owner did not withdraw the document. When the day of the sale arrived, it was announced that the last two lines of the catalogue entry should be altered to read thus:

> *** An important Contemporary Manuscript of considerable interest and believed to be unique.

Unique, indeed—i' faith! It was, moreover, made quite clear from the rostrum that the handwriting was not that of Charlotte Brontë. The purchaser was Mr. Walter Spencer, the secondhand-bookseller of New Oxford Street, London. Now the danger is, or was, Mr. Wise's advice not having been taken, that at some time or other this manuscript may get into circulation; and, as likely as not, be sold to some collector ignorant of its history. No one, of course, would dream of suggesting—and I am not suggesting it either—that Mr. Walter Spencer would sell it for anything other than it is. Doubtless he has put it with the rest of his curiosities. But he may not always control it. The time may come, unless Mr. Wise's course is adopted, when it will get into circulation. And on the strength of the original and uncorrected catalogue entry and the Frontispiece reproduction, decked up with a fine assortment of newspaper cuttings about Charlotte's "retraction", sold for hundreds of pounds.

There remains the not less interesting question: who committed this crime or in what circumstances was it done? The Manuscript may perhaps have been manufactured years ago for the purpose of influencing public opinion in favor of the School; and, having been seen through, was rejected. Possibly this explanation was in the auctioneer's mind when he altered the catalogue note. There is this alternative theory: that the handwriting of this purported Brontë document may perhaps, upon further examination, be recog-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nized as the handiwork of a man whose name is known to a few of us, and who is responsible for many forgeries. It suits him to conduct his nefarious trade from the Continent. Rare-book experts in England—for he can cook a "very desirable" association item also—and our booksellers would dearly love to catch him. It is very difficult for many reasons. But his time may come. In the case of this alleged Brontë manuscript, the name erased was a clever stroke (or rather strokes) of the artful dodger who produced it, because he knew enough to realize that, in view of the Gaskell controversy, to risk a name would be, in all probability, digging a pitfall. However, it was the only clever thing about the document, for, as a specimen of forgery, it was far below recent Shelley and Hardy perpetrations. To copy an author's poem and, by forging his hand, to make an "original manuscript" is a bad enough crime. But to fabricate a document showing a woman like Charlotte Brontë to be a liar and a debaser of her art is diabolical; and there is hardly a punishment too severe for the scoundrel. If he reads these few remarks of mine—as well he may—he will learn from this that more of his activities are known than he probably suspects. Already one of his "patrons" has been made, at the risk of exposure, to make restitution for dealing in his wares. It would have been a public benefit if no option had been given, and had restitution been called for through the channel of a public prosecution.

I have only to add that this forger must not be confused with the new American practitioner, who was briefly mentioned in my March Notes, and whose activities are still receiving the solicitous attention of one or two of us over here.

A LEIGH HUNT "POINT"

Mr. Gilbert Jamieson, the antiquarian bookseller, of 63, Beatrice Street, Bootle, Liverpool (Eng.) sends me note of a "point" regarding the first edition of *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt* (London: Edward Moxon . . . 1832). He thinks that Dr. Alexander Mitchell should have appended a note of warning under this title, which is collation No. 30 in his recent Bibliography. The "point" concerns the Remainder issue in cloth, which has no list of subscribers and advertisements; and "is important because the above is the edition that is quite frequently sold as the first edition. It is always as well to remind collectors of books 'not to collect' ". I quite agree; and am obliged to Mr. Jamieson for the note. Such "points" are always welcomed from bookmen.

BYRON'S "DON JUAN"

One of the recent catalogues of Messrs. Maggs Bros. revealed a curious coincidence which although personal may interest my readers. Two years ago when preparing a book for press I wrote a chapter on Byron in the course of which I commented: "The world and his wife were voraciously reading all that the naughty poet wrote; and particularly did the wife devour *Don Juan* the more its naughtiness was abused, as the author observed". I recall that at the time of writing I was a little concerned whether chapter and verse could be cited, not for the first two statements, but for the last—*"as the author observed"*. This week, browsing through Messrs. Maggs's catalogue No. 554 of *Autograph Letters and Historical Documents*, just issued, I found that item No. 37 was an original Byron Letter to John Hunt (9th April, 1823), in which the Don said:

> . . . I open my letter (so do not calumnate the post) to say that I have just seen a young man, late clerk to Galignani of Paris, who tells me that of all my works D. Juan is the most popular, and sells doubly in proportion, especially amongst the women who send for it the more it is abused. . . .

This very interesting letter of one page octavo, and signed with the initials only, ap-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pears in the catalogue at $600. This figure is only in proportion to the ever-increasing appreciation of Byron's letters and manuscripts. Most collections in private hands of recent years have either been bequeathed to national institutions or are intended for them; and the number available for the private collector is growing very small. A Byron letter signed in full with some of his caustic touches in it and referring to his writings, will soon reach the several-thousand-dollar mark—like almost any of Robert Burns.

THE THOUSAND DOLLAR BRAND

Since writing my last Notes I see that a bookshop has been opened in New York in which nothing will be priced at less than $1,000. The news was given much publicity in the London press; but the bold adventuress in this highly specialized and delightful trade should not anticipate a rush of London bibliophiles. Personally I do hope this fashion will not be followed. If we were limited to this exclusive kind of shop for book rarities, one would enter the portals as if branded with a $1,000 sign on the forehead or over the check-book pocket. This I think would be the feeling of most bookmen. I know many collectors of expensive books who in the pursuit of their special "wants" turn aside to carry off what looks to be an interesting item although of little value intrinsically. And take this case. On the shelves of the "$1,000 & up" shop is a Dr. Johnson First edition, say, which has a steady level value on January 1st of $1,250. By the following December 31st, either by reason of a wholesale decline in price or because an unexpected number of copies have come to light, this "standard" value has declined to $750. What about the limit then? Methinks the item would be in some danger of overstaying on the shelves. Lastly, does not this new type of shop rather preclude the bargain? Now there never yet was a book-collector who did not at some time in his career pick up at least one bargain, even in a shop more stocked with rarities than with cheap "miscellaneous". And there never yet was a bookseller who did not share his customer's thrill of satisfaction at the finding of a bargain (preferably picked up next door, of course). For the bookman it is not so much the mere financial gain that counts, as the pride of having "spotted" the rarity. The bargain is the rainbow of book-collecting but if the new shop of Miss Barbara Barnes were to set a fashion we should see the happy spectacle less often.

* * *

Catalogue humor:

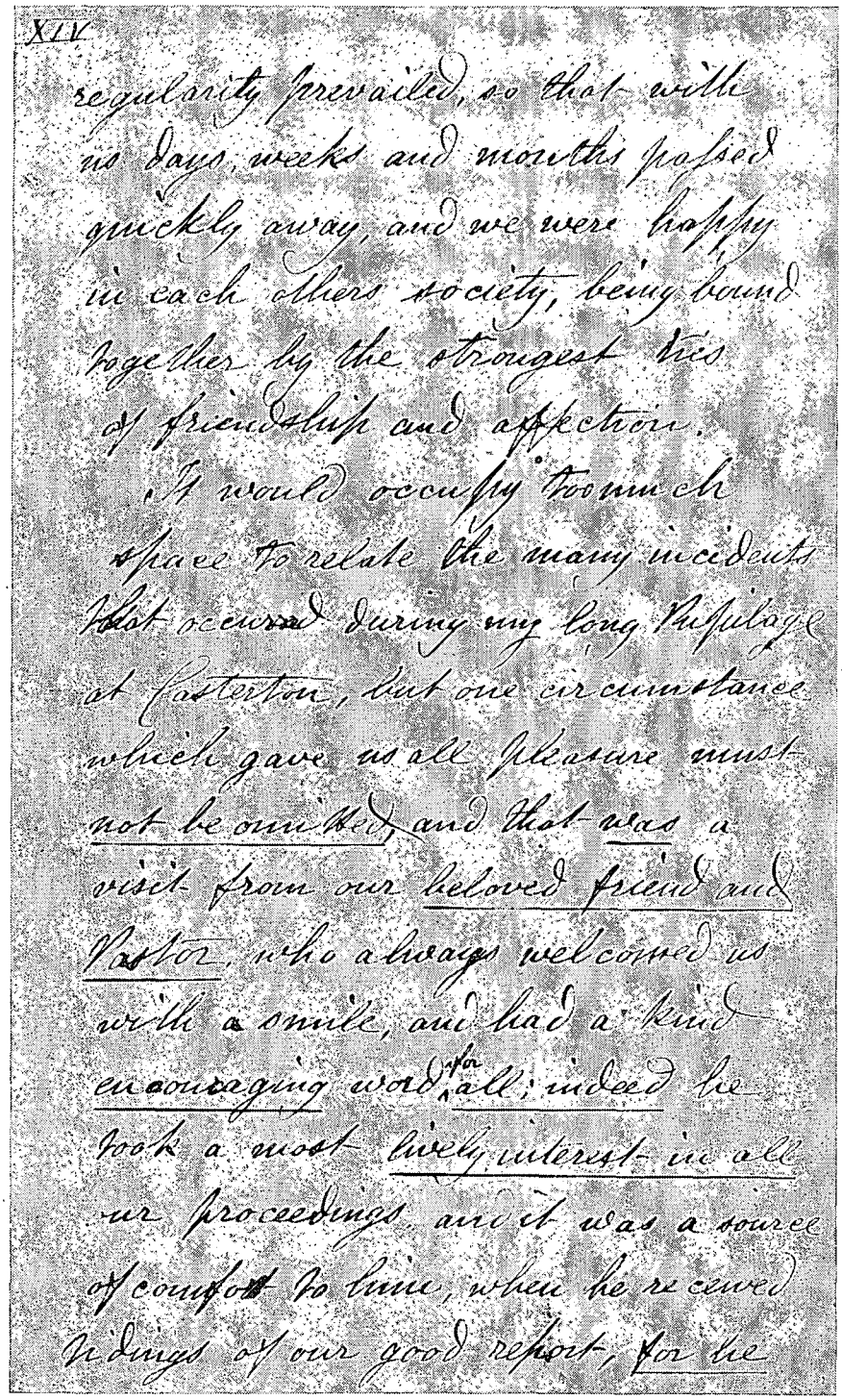
Engravings: "The Twelve Caesars and their Wives."

Cataloguer's comment: "A cheap lot to break up and frame in pairs".

The Demand for First Editions

The following table, compiled from various sources, shows the average weekly demand in England (on behalf of both American and English collectors) for modern first editions during the last month. The table is indicative only; and the absence of names like Fielding, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth and Tennyson, to mention only a few, does not mean that there is any less appreciation of these. In the case of most keenly collected authors not here represented, the supply of the desired items is so limited as to restrict the enquiries at the sources from which this table is compiled, although the demand is well understood. This month some very interesting changes occur as compared with last month. The American authors most in request but not coming within the limits of the table were Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and Emerson. There was also an unusual series of demands for "runs" of first editions of the following women novelists: Mrs. Craik; Mrs. Astel; Miss E. H. Young; Amelia Opie; Mary Borden; Edith Oliver; and Mrs. Belloc Lowndes. But in all cases except the first-named these

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



XLV

regularity prevailed, so that with no days, weeks and months passed quickly away, and we were happy in each others society, being bound together by the strongest ties of friendship and affection.

It would occupy too much space to relate the many incidents that occurred during my long Residence at Casterton, but one circumstance which gave us all pleasure must not be omitted, and that was a visit from our beloved friend and Pastor, who always welcomed us with a smile, and had a kind encouraging word for all; indeed he took a most lively interest in all our proceedings and it was a source of comfort to him, when he received tidings of our good report, for he

Reproduction of a page of the forged Manuscript in which Charlotte Brontë was made to retract what she wrote in "Jane Eyre" of the terrible conditions of her school.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were isolated demands only, and did not qualify for inclusion:—

Rudyard Kipling	36
A. P. Herbert	31
Charles Dickens	28
D. H. Lawrence	23
Sir Walter Scott	21
John Galsworthy	19
Kate Greenaway	16
Leigh Hunt	16
Somerset Maugham	16
Hugh Walpole	16
Thomas Hardy	15
J. B. Priestley	15
Sir Rider Haggard	14
Lewis Carroll	13
Sir Conan Doyle	13
Henry Williamson	13
Edgar Allan Poe	12
Anthony Trollope	12
Sir James Barrie	11
John Masefield	10
William McFee	10
George Moore	10
G. B. Shaw	10
Mary Webb	9
Algernon Swinburne	8
George Gissing	7
Samuel Butler	6
Stanley Weyman	6

X. Y. Z.

Books and MSS in the London Sale-rooms

American authors' first editions—Letters and MSS compare more favorably—A Collection of Aeronautica.

The spring sales have not so far been remarkable for the dispersal of any notable collections; but among various miscellaneous properties one has seen some items of American association interest at very reasonable prices. The chief, perhaps, was the *Enquiry into the effects of public punishment upon criminals and upon society. Read . . . at the house of his Excellency Benjamin Franklin, Esq. in Philadelphia, March 9, 1787.* This anonymous publication was written by Benjamin Rush; and was printed in Philadelphia by J. James in 1787. The item in question was, moreover, an inscribed presentation copy from the author to "Nich. Simon Van Winter, Esq.", and was in the original gray wrappers. It was well worth the $40 which was the final bid. Only five dollars more secured a good copy of the first issue of the first edition of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1855), with the word "dove" on page 96, line 7; and inserted a letter from the author to one of the publishers. A first edition of Longfellow's *Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858) was the next item; but there was little courting for it, and the price realized was $5. James Russell Lowell's *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets* (1st edn., Cambridge [Mass.], 1845) went to just over $15; Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1st edn., 2 vols., 8 advert leaves in vol. 1; Boston, 1860) to $22; Walt Whitman's *Passage to India* (1st issue of the 1st edn.; Washington, 1871), to $13; and a long "run" of sixty-seven of Bret Harte's first editions, including a few presentation copies, sold as a lot at $130. These prices did not compare with an example of the old Americana in a copy of T. Mante's *History of the Late Wars in North America* (1772) which changed hands at $280.

An unusual collection of Aeronautica was offered together in 51 lots, comprising books, manuscripts, paintings, drawings and engravings, realized a final bid of $750. Its chief item among the books was Francesco de Lana's *Prodromo*, with twenty engravings, in the original boards (folio Brescia, Rizzardi, 1670). The point of this book is that it contains the earliest known illustration of an airship; and was the first work to formulate a theory of Aerostatics.

Of English classics, the following may be noted: De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1st edn., an uncut copy in the orig. boards, 1822), $470; Fielding's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

History of Tom Jones (1st edn., in six vols., 1749) and the spurious *Tom Jones in the Married State* (1750), $300; Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (not perfect, with the catchword on page 213 of Vol. 1, 1766), $450; John Bunyan's *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity* (1684), $110. In these difficult days autograph MSS and letters rather make a better showing than, on the whole, do books; and this is not unnatural. In this same sale—we are at Sotheby's—was a one page folio agreement between Goldsmith and William Griffin in which the doctor agreed to write "a new natural history of Animals" in eight volumes, 8vo., for which the printer agreed to pay eight hundred guineas. In the end the work written was not the above, but *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature*; but the twice-signed agreement sold for $1,000. An Oliver Cromwell letter of one page at $500 was another fine item. Ruskin figures well these days; and for the autograph MSS of *The Ethics of the Dust* (1865) and four lectures, in all 284 pages, with the author's own copy inscribed of the *Ethics*, $600 was paid. The original MS. of Bret Harte's *Chu Chu*, 24 pages quarto, told a different tale to the books above mentioned, at $400. A fine Keats letter to W. Mayor at $1,600; a Charles Lamb letter at $200; and two of Byron's averaged $225.

At Hodgson's sale-rooms a first edition of John Galsworthy's *Jocelyn* by John Sinjohn, with one leaf of adverts, dated Easter, 1898 (1898) realized $150; Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise* (1st edn., L. P., 25 copies only, 1871), not in mint state, however, $40; W. H. Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1st edn., 1904), $95; Cabell's *Jurgen* (1st edn., illustrated by Pape, 1921), $25; A. E. Coppard's *The Black Dog and Other Stories* (orig. bds.), $35; his *Adam and Eve*, with letter inserted, $17; his *The Field of Mustard* (one of 85 copies), $17.50; and his *Silver Circus* (one of 125), $15—all first editions—were items of note.

BURTON, JUN.

THE BOOK MART

FOREIGN BOOKSELLERS

That Book You Want! We hold 2,000,000 vols.; new, secondhand, out-of-print, every conceivable subject. Also Rare Books and Sets of Authors. Books on approval. Outline requirements and interests; catalogues free (20 issued).
FOYLES, Charing Cross Road, London, England

THE FRANK HOLLINGS BOOKSHOP
7 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, London, Eng.
Catalogues free.
Rare and valuable books, prints, Manuscripts, Autograph letters for the Collector and Connoisseur. Write stating your requirements.

CATALOGUE 276G: containing Early Printed Books, Early Quarto Plays, English Literature, Standard Sets, First Editions, Books from Famous & Private Presses, etc: post free on application from **B. H. BLACKWELL, LTD.,** 50 Broad St., Oxford, England.

E. von SCHERLING
Leyden (Holland)
31a Vreewijkstraat
JUST OUT:
Rotulus, a Quarterly Bulletin for Manuscript collectors, vol. 1, 2, with catalogue containing many classics, an unpublished commentary on the gospels, early 9th century vellum ms., etc. Free on request.

HENRY DANIELSON
Catalogues of BOOKS from the Libraries of the late Sir Edmund Gosse C.B., Litt. D. and Clement K. Shorter. Post Free.
64 Charing Cross Road, London W. C. 2 England

RARE BOOKS & FIRST EDITIONS
1600—1930
FINE COLLECTORS' COPIES
New Catalogue No. 27, now printing. Post free
MAJOR HARTLEY CLARK,
18 Hertford St., London, W. 1

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BON VOYAGE

"Of Shoes—and Ships—and Sealing-Wax—of Cabbages—and Kings"

BY ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

THE time has come, as the Walrus said, to scan a variety of books dealing with a variety of lands. To begin: do not be misled by the title of Charles Graves's—*And the Greeks* (McBride. $2.50). The book has nothing to do with the splendors of the Acropolis; or the "glory that was Greece"; or the isles where "burning Sappho loved and sung". The fact that P. G. Wodehouse contributes the introduction should be sufficient warning against that misconception. Mr. Graves has taken his title from a song once made famous by the Duncan sisters. His subject is the cosmopolitan butterfly and gigolo life of London and various fashionable resorts on the Continent and in Egypt; the burden of his argument that the English milord of tradition, scattering gold to the peasants, is no more; his place having been taken by Americans, Egyptians, Argentines, Portuguese—and the Greeks.

In light vein Mr. Graves conveys the reader to Juan-les-Pins, Deauville, Le Touquet, St. Moritz, Monte Carlo, Cannes, Cairo, Dinard, the Lido, and then back to London for serious consideration of the comparative virtues of certain *cuisines* and night clubs. At Juan-les-Pins the white beard of G.B.S. wags wittily and ponderously. Typical of the mocking note of the book is a bit of comment made by the manager of a *mont-de-piété*, or pawnbroker, of Monte Carlo on the national characteristics of the various clients who turn to him after disastrous defeat at the gaming tables. "The Americans", he said, "always come in with their hats on and cigars in their mouths. That is rude, to keep on the hat—so I tell my secretary to fetch me my hat and I put it on. Then they are politer."

In somewhat the same vein as Mr. Graves's book, again emphasizing the note of informality, is *The Vienna That Is Not in the Baedeker* (McBride. $2.50), by T. W. MacCullum, "from the original" of Ludwig Hirschfield. The latitude of the adaptation has made the book English throughout in its point of view. Mr. MacCullum is not concerned with church windows or baroque portals, but with Vienna's coffee houses, concerts, theatres, music halls, night clubs, sports, shops and hotels. In Vienna, as everywhere else, a new world has taken the place of the old. Take the celebrated literary cafés where so much pioneer work in realistic and secessionistic literature is said to have originated. At present they are hardly to be found outside the histories of the Austrian literature in the early years of the century. The older generation, men like Bahr, Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and Beer-Hofmann, prefer the comfort of home. The younger men are swayed by private interests. Also progress, in the form of the typewriter, has contributed to the change. A café table fitted the scribbler of yore. But nowadays even a Vienna *cafetier* would be likely to draw the line at the clicking of the keys.

Leaving behind the tired world lashing itself to rounds of excitement by day and night, journey with Major A. Radclyffe Dugmore, F.R.G.S., to *Corsica the Beautiful* (Houghton Mifflin. $3.50). Major Dugmore's writings, explorations, and splendid war-time service are well known.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED